Times of Retirement

George Matheson

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G. Matheson

TIMES OF RETIREMENT

Devotional Meditations

BY

GEORGE MATHESON, M.A., D.D., F.R.S.E.

AUTHOR OF

"Moments on the Mount," "Voices of the Spirit," Etc.

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE AUTHOR

By the Rev. D. MacMillan

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Preface

AT the request of many I have collected these fugitive devotional pieces which at stray moments I have been contributing to an organ of the Church of Scotland —" Saint Andrew." They have been the diversion from sustained work, and in no other light do I offer them. Yet there are some who cannot study sustained work; they have not leisure enough or they have not health enough. For such, truth must come " in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Any one of these meditations can be read in three minutes; yet three minutes may influence a whole day. Accordingly, I have consented to give them collective form. They will not all appeal equally to every mood of mind. Where one does not appeal, lay it aside, but do not throw it away; what is not your message to-day may be your message to-morrow. It is often said that devotion is a thing of the heart. I do not think it is either

merely or mainly so. I hold that all emotion is based upon intellectual conviction. Even your sense of natural beauty is so based. Whence comes that joy with which you gaze on a bit of landscape you call "a picture-scene"? Precisely from your intellectual conviction that it is *not* a picture; if you believed it to be a painting, your emotion would die altogether. A man may have *faith* in what he does not understand, but he cannot have *emotion* in what he does not understand. The heart must have a theory for its own music. Therefore the devotional writer must have a message as much as the expositor. Devotion must be the child of reflection; it may rise on wings, but they must be the wings of thought. The meditations of this little book will appeal to the instinct of prayer just in proportion as they appeal to the teachings of experience; therefore, before all things, I have endeavoured to base the feelings of the heart on the conclusions of the mind.

G. M.

EDINBURGH, 1901.

Rev. George Matheson, D.D.

*A Biographical Sketch by the Rev. D. MacMillan, M.A., Editor of "Saint Andrew."

GEORGE MATHESON was born just a year before the great Disruption took place in that Church which he was afterwards destined to adorn; and though the period from then till now is as historians measure time comparatively brief, a change has come over the face of ecclesiastical Scotland which is as striking as it is hopeful. 1843 saw the formation of the Free Church through secession from the Church of Scotland, and 1900 saw the creation of the United Free Church by a union of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. The larger visible union which some dream of, may be in the distant future; still, a kindlier spirit prevails, and

* Prepared at the special request of the publishers.

a recognition of the invisible bonds which make all Christians one, may be declared to be the chief religious feature of the time. So far Dr. Matheson has not lived in vain, for though seldom if ever taking part in the proceedings of Church courts, or enacting in any way the rôle of the ecclesiastic, he has ever striven to discover those deeper springs of religious thought and feeling which are common to all and which explain and reconcile the outward differences. It is the Christian *thinker* who sows the seeds of those movements which in due time take visible shape in the Church; and within recent years no one by voice or pen has done more than has the subject of the present memoir to discover those elements of the spiritual life which lie beneath creeds and forms of church government, and which make all believing hearts one.

Dr. Matheson was born in Glasgow on March 27, 1842. He was fortunate in his place of birth. There is no city in the United Kingdom, probably no city in the Empire, which during the Victorian era made such rapid strides as Glasgow. The enterprise of

its merchants and the energy of its municipal rulers have become a proverb. In population, size and wealth its progress for a European city has been almost phenomenal. It has its feet, however, firmly planted on the historic past. Its Cathedral dates from the dawn of the middle ages, and its University from before the Reformation. Hence it possesses the two elements which are conducive to true development—love of the past and hope for the future, a freedom which is restrained from running into license, and a conservatism which is saved from obscurantism. One can readily understand the influence which such a city would have upon the mental growth of a young man of Matheson's temperament. Keenly susceptible to outward impressions and intellectually alive to the spirit of the times, he must in the earlier period of his life have been greatly moulded by his environment. It cannot accordingly be accounted an accident that we find in his writings the same boldness of thought and eager breaking of fresh ground, which characterise his native city in its commercial and municipal enterprises, along with

a reverence for tradition which gives to each landmark its true place in human development.

Dr. Matheson was also fortunate in his parentage. He has sprung from those in whom were combined the best features of the national life. He has in his veins the blood of the Celtic Highlander and the Lowland Scot. It is to this union in his nature we must look for that happy blending of imagination and reason which gives to his writings their peculiar power, and to his preaching that touch of insight and persuasive eloquence which is its special charm.

Dr. Matheson's parents, at the time of his birth, resided at 39 Abbottsford Place, on the south side of the river. The district was then regarded as most desirable for residential purposes. It has, however, been subjected to the changes which have affected Glasgow since that period. The houses are still considered good, but the needs of an ever growing commerce have compelled those who desire quiet and purer air to live in the outskirts of the city or in one of the many suburbs that have sprung up during the last half-century. Dr. Mathe-

son's father—the founder of the well-known firm of Wilson, Matheson & Co., was in good, and latterly in affluent circumstances, and so was able to give his son the best education that Glasgow could offer. He accordingly sent him to the Academy, which was then situated in Elmbank street, the buildings being the same as those in which the High School is now housed. There young Matheson had a brilliant career. He carried off the first prize in every department. It now became evident that the young scholar was destined for a professional career, and that career the Church. The intellectual ability, literary aspirations and oratorical gifts and love for preaching which he had already developed pointed to this course as the only possible one. Accordingly in 1859 he matriculated as a student in Glasgow University. The Scottish universities have always occupied an honourable position in the educational world. They are of ancient origin, and though for many generations they had to struggle for their very existence, they have ever striven to keep pace with the intellectual need of the country, and through

them Scotland has, in proportion to its population, probably sent into the professions and public life more successful and noted men than any other constituent portion of the Kingdom or Empire. They have never been without distinguished teachers in one or more of the departments of study—the advantages which they offer drawing to them some of the ablest and most scholarly men in the United Kingdom.

When Dr. Matheson became a student the University was situated in High street. It was not a building without striking features, as is testified by the gateway—the only portion remaining—at the entrance to the magnificent new buildings on Gilmorehill. The site of the old college is now occupied by a large railway depot, and hardly a sign of the ancient walls remains. During his career as a student he had the good fortune to receive instruction at the hands of several noted men. William Ramsay was professor of Latin, Edmund Law Lushington of Greek, Robert Buchanan of Logic, and Lord Kelvin of Natural Philosophy. Young Matheson took a leading part in

classics, and carried off everything in logic and philosophy. It was at this period that he gave the first proofs of that pre-eminence in speculative thought which has since distinguished him. Glasgow had had a succession of able men in that department of study, and from the days of Francis Hutcheson had been famous for its philosophical eminence. It was to receive additional lustre a few years later when Edward Caird became professor of Moral Philosophy; but Robert Buchanan was no unworthy successor of Adam Smith. Certain it is that he stimulated young Matheson's ardour in pursuit of his favourite study, with the happy result that the pupil took the first prize in the senior division of the Logic class, and gained a similar honour for an essay on the best specimen of Socratic Dialogue. He was first prizeman also in the Moral Philosophy class, and graduated in 1862 with honours in Philosophy. It was about this time that a calamity which would have daunted most men befel him. At the age of twenty he became practically blind. When only eighteen months old his sight began to be affected

by internal inflammation, which recurring intermittently, finally destroyed it. During the gradual decline he was able with his own eyes to acquire a knowledge of Latin, Greek, French and German, and to learn penmanship. The foundation of his wide scholarship was thus providentially laid. Quite undismayed by what to the vast majority of men would have proved a fatal misfortune Dr. Matheson determined to proceed with his studies, and so he entered the Divinity Hall in the autumn of 1862. This was Dr. John Caird's first session as professor of Systematic Theology in Glasgow University. Caird began his new duties with the reputation of being the most popular preacher in Scotland. Many were doubtful as to his qualifications for a post which demanded thought and scholarship rather than eloquence. He soon dispelled all doubts. During the later part of his ministerial life his mind had been turned towards the fresh movements in philosophy and theology which had recently taken place in Germany, and which were beginning to affect the trend of thought on these subjects in this country. For generations, Scottish

students had been accustomed to receive from their professors a course in systematic theology purely on Calvinistic lines. The high-water-mark of this form of teaching can be seen in Principal Hill's Lectures on Divinity, published in 1833 by his son, Dr. Alexander Hill, Caird's immediate predecessor. However well suited for former generations, it was becoming daily more evident that the old method of treatment could not meet the wants of the new race of students. The deeper religious and intellectual needs of the times could not be satisfied by a formal and, in the main, scholastic handling of theology. Hence Caird, with his larger outlook, his greater breadth and freedom of spirit, his fresh standpoint and his knowledge of and sympathy with the current movements of European thought, put a new face on Scottish theology, and inspired young Matheson with a love for the speculative side of religion which has characterised him ever since. Associated with Dr. Caird in the Divinity Faculty were Drs. Jackson, Weir and Dickson, professors of Church History, Hebrew and Biblical Criticism respectively.

Matheson's career in Theology was quite as distinguished as in Arts. He graduated as a Bachelor of Divinity in 1866, and in the same year he was licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow as a probationer of the Church of Scotland.

So far all had been well. The bright lad, the promising scholar, had received and taken advantage of the best education that his native land could supply. Anticipating as it were the final results of the physical calamity that from his earliest years affected him, he took time by the forelock and packed into school and college days all the learning that great ability and incessant application could acquire. He left the University the most brilliant student of his time, but what would this avail him in the arduous task that now lay before him of proving himself able to discharge the duties of a profession which demands for success not only mental endowments of no mean order, but the possession, unimpaired, of all one's physical organs? That was the question which the young minister had now to answer, and though he had never done anything more in

answering it than by securing an appointment through popular election to a parish, and discharging with credit the duties of his office, he would deserve to be remembered as one of the most remarkable men of his day. But Dr. Matheson has done that and much more. He has by his great gifts as a preacher and writer ranked himself among the most eminent men of the time.

In 1867, six months after license, he was appointed assistant to Rev. Dr. MacDuff, of Sandyford Church, Glasgow, and in the following year he was chosen, by popular election, minister of Innellan. He declined, in 1880, a unanimous call to succeed Dr. Cumming, London. He was Baird Lecturer in 1881, and one of the St. Giles' lecturers for 1882, and in 1879 the University of Edinburgh conferred on him the honorary degree of D.D. In 1886 he was translated to the Parish of St. Bernard's, Edinburgh, which he resigned two years ago owing to increasing literary work. He was offered the Gifford Lectureship in the University of Aberdeen for 1900-1 and 1901-2, but declined; and in 1890 he

was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Dr. Matheson's career as an author began in 1874, when he was in his thirty-second year. It was then he published anonymously his first book "Aids to the Study of German Theology." It soon reached a third edition, the second appearing with the author's name on the title page. From then until the autumn of last year, when the second volume of his latest book "Studies of the Portrait of Christ" appeared, he has published altogether something like twenty volumes, besides numerous articles in the leading reviews and magazines, both in this country and in America. Several of his works have been translated into other languages: "My Aspirations," and "Words by the Wayside," two devotional volumes, into German; his article in the Contemporary Review on "The Originality of the Character of Christ" into French; his "Studies of the Portrait of Christ" into Chinese. For the use of his famous hymn, beginning "O Love that wilt not let me go," contributed to the revised edition of the "Scottish Hymnal," he has received application from all parts

of the world. The mere recital of these facts appeals to the imagination. It tells of constant steady labour, which only the few have been able to equal; but when we reflect that Dr. Matheson has nearly all his life been partially and since his twentieth year has been practically blind, even imagination is quite incapable of grasping the facts! We can readily understand the strong desire of Queen Victoria to see and hear this remarkable subject of hers. It was in 1885, while he was still at Innellan, that she summoned him to preach before her at Balmoral. The Queen was extremely delighted with his sermon, gave him an interview, spoke of his devotional works which she had read, presented him with a small bust of herself, asked for a copy of his sermon and in parting said: "Your life has been a sorely tried, but a very beautiful one."

Like most great preachers Dr. Matheson attained distinction at a bound. From the very first he drew the eyes of men to him, and his hold on the public mind and heart has been steadily strengthening. Since the death of Principal Caird he has been the greatest Scot-

tish preacher, and this we say not because of the vast crowds which assemble to hear him but because of the message which he brings and the manner in which he delivers it. In these we have the measure of the preacher's mind and the power of his personality, and they combine in him, as in every commanding orator, to give him his unique position.

The congregation of Sandyford Church, where he began his ministerial career, was one of the largest and most cultured in the West End of Glasgow. Dr. MacDuff, its minister, had some misgivings about young Matheson's choice of a profession. He asked him, however, for a sermon; and so delighted was he that he appointed him his assistant next day. But it was at Innellan that the rising preacher reached his full powers and established his reputation.

Situated on the shores of the Firth of Clyde midway between Greenock and Rothesay, Innellan, up to the middle of last century, was little more than a hamlet. With the growth of Glasgow and the increased means of locomotion by train and steamboat, it soon began to be a favourite summer resort for city mer-

chants and their families. In a short time pretty villas dotted its shores, and for three months in mid-summer a gay throng of visitors frequented the village and found health and pastime by the waters of the Firth of Clyde. No one who has resided at Innellan will feel any surprise at its popularity. From the lawn in front of the manse, which, with the church beside it, crowns the hill that overlooks the village, one's eye rests on a scene as bright and winning as is to be found in Scotland. Looking to the left, due east almost, the hills of Cowal are seen merging into the mountains that guard the entrance to Loch Goil and Loch Long, and the shores of Kilcreggan seem to close the mouth of the Gareloch and the estuary of the Clyde. In front and straight south one looks on Skelmorlie and the Ayrshire coast. The most inspiring view is to the west, where the broad waters of the Firth flow into the Irish Channel, the far-stretching sea broken by the Isle of Cumbrae, Toward Point, the low hills of Bute, in the distance the high peaks of Arran and standing solitary as a sentinel in mid-channel, Ailsa Craig. It is no straining of language

to say that Dr. Matheson, during his ministry of eighteen years, stimulated, if he did not supply, the other two forces which coupled with that of Nature make the triumph of man's inner being complete. By his preaching he quickened the religious and intellectual life of his hearers, and visitors to Innellan found that refreshment which a union of the three forces—nature, mind and spirit—alone can supply. The most inspiring memories of youth are intellectual; hence it is, that, Dr. Matheson is to us something more than a popular preacher. We cannot forget those Sundays at Innellan when, with the teaching of one of the deepest thinkers that then filled a university chair fresh in our mind, we attended worship in that little country church and listened with rapt admiration to sermons which were as profound, suggestive and stimulating as the lectures of the renowned professor. We felt that Matheson discovered by a flash of genius what Edward Caird found out by a long process of thought. Though *all* seasons revealed the preacher's gifts, it was in the summer time that they reached their highest level. A crowded church, an

intelligent, sympathetic audience and a band of ardent disciples drew out his powers; and we are among those who think that Dr. Matheson never preached better than he did then. True, his preaching has developed. In those days, his sermons were carefully polished; sentences, paragraphs and periods were studiously balanced. In later years, he has taken command of the ship, so to speak, and preaches not by rote or rule, but in obedience to his own personality. What his sermons may have lost in literary finish, they have gained in naturalness, directness and power. During the earlier part of his career, Dr. Matheson was in the habit of dictating his sermons to his secretary and then committing them almost verbatim to memory, but for many years past he has contented himself with carefully thinking out and preparing a synopsis of his discourse. This he easily carries in his mind; and his marvellous gift of extempore speech enables him to fill in the skeleton in the course of delivery.

His ministry at Innellan was eminently successful. At the time of his ordination his charge was only a chapel of ease. Within the

short period of five years it was by his efforts endowed and created into a parish. A year earlier the manse was built. All this meant the raising of a capital sum of close upon £3,000, and when it is remembered that the inhabitants numbered only a few hundred and that the summer population was at best uncertain and resident in the village only for a month or two, the substantial results achieved reveal not only Dr. Matheson's popularity as a preacher, but his practical wisdom and interest in the Church. At the very time of his leaving Innellan, plans were preparing for extending the church so as to afford room for the increasing congregation that assembled to hear him.

Dr. Matheson was fortunate in his first charge. During the winter months the only demands on his time were his parochial duties and the preparation of his weekly sermon. The former were neither numerous nor exacting, but they were faithfully discharged; and into the latter he put his best thought and energy. His practice was to choose on the Sunday night his text for the following Sabbath. It was then, to

use his own phrase, "without form and void." Each day something was added to it mentally until Saturday came, when the sermon was complete. To a man of his exceptional intellectual ability and application, there was accordingly ample leisure for study and literary work; that leisure was utilised to the utmost. Every day saw its allotted share of reading and reflection and composition. Within a few years from his appointment he began to publish; and the number of books that have since been written by him, whilst they are proofs of personal industry, also testify to the advantages of his early environment in affording him time for thought and reflection.

Dr. Matheson's reputation was thoroughly established when in 1886 he received a call to the pastorate of St. Bernard's Parish Church, Edinburgh. It was with deep regret and sorrow that the parishioners of Innellan parted with him. They bade him farewell with every token of affection and respect. He had lent distinction to the place, and with his departure they felt would vanish not a little of its attraction to residents and visitors alike. He faced

his new and onerous duties in the large parish and among the congregation of 1,700 members of St. Bernard's with his wonted energy. In a comparatively short time he had visited every family, and, throwing himself with all his ardour into his pulpit duties, he drew crowds of hearers from far and near. It had been felt by his friends in the Church and by Scotsmen generally that a man of his brilliant powers ought not be stranded on the shores of the Firth of Clyde, but that he should be in the centre of the thought and life of the country, so that his influence might be felt by a wider circle. In Edinburgh such possibilities existed, and the many who remember his preaching and his fourteen years of active ministerial work in St. Bernard's, know how these possibilities were taken advantage of to the very fullest. Not only did he keep together the large original congregation of St. Bernard's, maintain in perfect working order the many organisations in connection with it, and carry out architectural improvements which cost nearly £2,000, but he gathered round him a fresh band of disciples, thinkers and eager seekers after truth—

among them not a few whose faith was distressed, and who found in his sermons the message for which their souls had been waiting. Nor did he relax his literary labours, which were greatly facilitated by the knowledge which he acquired in 1892 of the Braille system for the blind which he has found of inestimable value. In preparing for the press his practise is to write each day in Braille what he deems an adequate amount, and on the following day to read off this in dictation to his secretary.

To be a preacher of the first rank is a great distinction. It may, however, be shared by others. To have at the same time an equal reputation as an author is of rare occurrence, and this is Dr. Matheson's unique fortune. Thousands who never heard him preach have read his books. Through them he addresses a vast multitude. His reputation, it may be said without exaggeration, is not only European, but world-wide. A glance at his books shows the wide range of his intellectual sympathies. In his first work, "Aids to the Study of German Theology," we have the professed theologian. In his "Natural Elements of Re-

vealed Theology" (the Baird Lecture), "Landmarks of New Testament Morality," and "The Spiritual Development of St. Paul," he sustains the same role. In "The Growth of the Spirit of Christianity," "The Lady Ecclesia" and "The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions" we have the student of the history of religious thought. In "Can the Old Faith Live with the New?" and "The Psalmist and the Scientist" we see the cultured Christian Apologist. In "My Aspirations," "Moments on the Mount," "Words by the Wayside," and "Voices of the Spirit," we discover the subtle interpreter of the Devout Life; and in his latest and greatest work, "Studies of the Portrait of Christ," we have revealed unto us the full measure of the man, the limner who sees with the eyes of the soul and draws with the hand of the spirit. Through all these works there plays a strong imagination and a subtle fancy, twin children of the muses, and these blossom in his book of verse, "Sacred Songs," and proclaim him a poet. It is remarkable that among all Dr. Matheson's works there is not a single volume of sermons. He

has steadily resisted this temptation before which so many ministers fall; still, we agree with those who think that if he made a careful selection of his discourses the volume would take high rank and be welcomed by clergy and laity alike. The qualities which one finds in Dr. Matheson's preaching are equally apparent in his published works—originality and lucidity, depth of thought lit up by beauty of style, a fresh setting of an old truth, a subtle distinction followed by a hitherto unseen resemblance. All this and much more give that charm to his writings which has gained for them so wide a popularity. But through them all, varied as we have seen them to be, there is a settled purpose; and a brief consideration of this point brings us to what may be termed Dr. Matheson's theological position.

We have already referred to two influences which were not without their effect in shaping Dr. Matheson's intellectual life—environment and heredity. We glanced at another—the fresh movement in theology which first made itself felt in Scottish university teaching during his career in the Divinity Hall. But this last was

itself only the outcome of a deeper and wider movement which had been affecting men's views in theology for many years. It began fully a century ago in Germany, was taken up in Britain, and gradually revolutionised the standpoint and method of theology as a whole. Even the ordinary lay mind is familiar with the names of Kant, Hegel and Schleiermacher, of Coleridge, Maurice and Robertson of Brighton, of Erskine of Linlathen and Mac-Leod Campbell. There is much that is different in the writings of these men. They by no means belong to the same school. On many points that some might regard as most essential they may be opposed; but in one thing they are agreed—in their breaking away from mechanical and sterile views of religion and in their introduction of a new element into the study of Divine truth. Without despising or discarding the value of history and outward evidence, but rather placing these in their true relationship, they brought into fuller light the significance of personal experience in religion and emphasised the nature of its spiritual inwardness as originating in will or thought or

feeling, or in all three combined. In any case, the religious spirit was liberated from the outward fetters of dogma, whatever form it may have assumed, and was free to face God and His self-revelation in nature, history, providence and the bible with unveiled face. Dr. Matheson, during his student days and his first years at Innellan felt the full force of this movement; and, while thoroughly loyal to his spirit, his aim has all along been to strengthen and extend it on the lines of true historical development. Laying hold of the inward essential element in religion which goes beneath and is common to every variety of creed and school of thought, Dr. Matheson is able to do justice to all the forms of belief which have manifested themselves, not only during the Christian era, but since reflection on Divine things began. He finds in them broken lights of the true ideal of religion as it is found in the Person and Life of Christ. Though helpful and inspiring beyond measure as a theologian, it is as a great religious teacher we must regard him, and religion is above and beyond and beneath theology. No profound spiritual thinker has

ever been able or has ever even made the attempt to put his deepest convictions into the language of the schools. Theological terminology would slay his beliefs, which are of the spirit; and scholastic logic or confessional forms and symbols could not express them. We believe that this is profoundly true of Dr. Matheson. He cannot be labelled as a Calvinist or Arminian, as a Broad Churchman or Evangelical, and be quietly put on the theological shelf. He is none of these and yet all—just as religion, of which every theological school is a one-sided representation, belongs to no school, and yet can claim all. The fact is, the spirit of Dr. Matheson's teaching goes beneath all outward distinctions and divisions of Christian theology. He is a great reconciler—the Schleiermacher of contemporary theological thought—and points out the deeper truth which underlies and embraces the broken lights of opposing forms of thought. It is accordingly as an inspiring force that we must regard him. He may never found a school, but he makes many disciples. He has probably influenced a greater number of young men than any other living preacher.

The students of all the theological halls crowd round him in Edinburgh. He is the prime favourite of the Guildsman, and to be a Mathesonian is a growing characteristic of many of our rising pulpit orators.

Dr. Matheson, who has never been married, lives in Edinburgh. Much of his happiness and success is due to his eldest sister, whose life has been devoted to him. In private he is one of the most genial and simple of men, bright and witty to a degree. He has ever a hearty welcome for a friend and dispenses hospitality with a generous hand. He is only in his fifty-ninth year; and though he has the record of a full life behind him, this we believe will only act as an incentive to the accomplishment of greater things in the future.

Times of Retirement

"THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF CHRIST"

"Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with."
St. John iv. 11.

THE Woman of Samaria has struck the marvel in the life of Jesus; He had nothing to draw with. The most attractive figure in the fields of time had no outward cause for His attractiveness. He says so Himself, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." His drawing will be proportionate to His *with*drawing, to His shrinking within Himself, to His sacrifice. The greatest compliment you can pay to man or woman is to say that they attract without adornment. There are some who would reveal their birth in any garb —in the meanest, in the poorest. You might clothe them in rags; you might lodge them in hovels; you might surround them with the

humblest furniture; but their speech would betray them to be "not of Galilee." They have nothing to draw with, but they themselves draw. They may stand before the judgment-seat of a Pilate; but their attitude says "I am a king."

So is it with Thee, Thou Son of the Highest. Thou hast nothing to attract but Thine own beauty. Thou hast put off the best robe of the Father; Thou hast assumed the dress of the prodigal son. It is in a soiled garment that Thou hast solicited my love. Thou hast come to me footsore and weary—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Thou hast offered me no gifts of material glory. Thou hast asked me to share Thy poverty. Thou hast said: "Wilt thou come with me to the place where the thorns are rifest, to the land where the roses are most rare? Wilt thou follow me down the deep shadows of Gethsemane, up the steep heights of Calvary? Wilt thou go with me where the hungry cry for bread, where the sick implore for health, where the weary weep for rest? Wilt thou accompany me where pain dwells, where danger lurks, where death lies?

Wilt thou walk with me through the lanes and alleys where the poor meet and struggle and die? Wilt thou live with me where the world passes by in scorn, where fashion pauses not to rest, where even disciples have often forsaken me and fled? Then is thy love complete, my triumph perfected. Then have I reached the summit of human glory; for thou hast chosen me for myself alone, and without the aid of earth I have drawn thy heart to heaven."

A CHAPTER IN INWARD BIOGRAPHY"

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

1st Peter i. 13.

THERE were three stages in the life of Peter, and unconsciously he repeats them here. He began with the "girding"—what Christ calls the self-confidence of youth. Life stretched before him *joyously;* it seemed a very easy thing. Its sea was a place of promenade; men could walk on it; *he* at all events could walk on it. Others might need to go *round* the loch; but he could cross over it; "on the banks of Allan Water, none so gay as he." Then came the second stage—the "sobering down." Life stretched before him *gloomily;* self-confidence vanished; despair came. Not only could nobody walk on the sea; nobody could *sail* on it. It was all storm,

storm, storm. He put out his hand and cried "Save me, I perish;" "on the banks of Allan Water, none so sad as he." Then came the third stage—the "hoping for a grace beyond." Life stretched before him *Godwardly*. It was a new confidence—no longer in self, but in heaven. It was the union of aspiration and humility. It said: "I am a poor enough creature; yet if on life's sea there were not a haven for me, I should not be here. God has a place for me—if not on the promenade, then in the ship—if not in the ship, then in the ferryboat. It is coming, it is coming; it will be here by and by."

Even such, my soul, is God's leading of *thee*. At first thou seest Christ without the storm—Christ too near, Christ coming apart from the clouds. Heaven is so close at hand that earth dwindles, and its biggest concerns become trifles. Thy Father will not let thee believe that; and so He sends thee a sobering down. Thou hast seen Christ without the storm; *He* gives thee a vision of the storm without Christ—a vision sore but salutary. It brings thee into touch with human grief; it teaches thee the

fellowship that lies in the mystery of pain; bless thy Father for the sobering hour. At last there comes to thee the reconciling morning—the waiting for thy Christ *in* the storm. Thou hast seen thy Christ alone; thou hast seen thy storm alone; but the marriage is coming. These feet Divine shall touch thy human sea, and the marriage bells shall ring "It is I; I and the storm are one." Ring out, glad bells, and we shall cease to be afraid. It is not *less storm* we need, it is more light. We would not suspend Jacob's struggle; let but the day break to tell us he is vanquished by an angel's wing. Thou canst bear a thousand waves if they claim identity with Jesus; the storm will not grate upon thine ear if He says "It is I." All grace shall come to thee "at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"THE STRENGTH OF THE HEART"

"God is the strength of my heart."—Psalm lxxiii. 26.

WHY is God the strength of the heart? Because God is love. The strength of the heart is not its steeling, but its softening. How am I to bear the spectacle of human sorrow? I am often called to go into such scenes, and it tries all my courage. What shall be the ground of my courage; where shall lie my strength for meeting the scene? Shall I harden my heart? It is quite possible to do so. But remember, to harden the heart is to weaken the heart. You may purchase immunity from the pain of the spectacle; but it is by the administration of chloroform. But I will show you a more excellent way—the way, not of the heart's weakness, but of its strength. There is no power which strengthens the heart like the fulness of its own love. There is nothing which can bear scenes of misery like love

itself. Why is this? It is because all love has hope in it. An inferior feeling would be less fit to bear. Pity could not bear like love. Pity does not mean hope; it sees only the dark side, and so it often prompts to flight. But love has no despair in it. There is ever a light in its valley. It is always accompanied by its two sisters—faith and hope; that is why it is the strength of the heart.

Thou Christ of love, none could bear scenes of sorrow like *Thee*. Thy disciples had less love; therefore they were more easily overcome. "Send her away, for she crieth after us" was their plaint to Thee concerning the suppliant woman. They had only the pain of *pity*. Their nerves were irritated by the cry. They wanted to shut their ears. *Thou* hadst a deeper pain— love's pain—the pain that carries promise in its bosom. *They* could not cast out the sorrow by reason of their unbelief—unbelief in the possibility of the cure. But Thou hadst so much love that Thou couldst believe all things. Why has the Lord "laid on Thee the iniquities of us all"? Because Thou hadst more hardness than others? Nay; because

Thou hadst more love. The strength of Thy heart was Thy tenderness; it was its "gentleness that made Thee great." All the generations pressed upon the bridge, and the bridge was not broken. Why? Not because it was made of iron, but because it was made of velvet. Thy love could bear all things because it could believe all things. It could go before us into Galilee—into all the Galilees of human pain. It could outstrip us on the road to succour earthly need, for it was, it is, the very strength of God.

"THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE BEATIFIC VISION"

"They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them."—1st Corinthians, x. 4.

IT is ever so. The blessing of our good deeds does not accompany them; it follows them. It often seems at the time as if they were done in vain. Our good actions appear for the present to have a death in the desert. You give a coin to a beggar who seems to be starving. He thanks you profusely. You watch his receding form, and see him vanish into the first gin-shop. You say "my charity has all gone for nothing." No; it is only your money that has. Do not identify your money with your charity. The one, through the force of long habit, may be spent in an ale-house within five minutes; the other may be laid up in the heart for years, and bear rich interest after many days. I have seen a kind advice

bring forth at the time only a storm of temper; but on the morrow it was weighed and accepted. "Light is *sown* for the righteous" is a beautiful phrase. It tells me that I must expect my good deeds to lie underground a while. Like the disciples, I must begin the journey to Emmaus ere I have heard of the risen flower. Yet my Christ shall overtake me on the way, and at evening, when the day is far spent, the fruits of the morning shall abide with me.

Lord, if Thou wilt go *before* me, I shall be content that Thy goodness and mercy *follow* me. I should not like to postpone obedience to Thy command till I can see the good of it. There are times when to me, as to Abraham, there comes the mandate, "Get thee out of thy country into a land which thou knowest not." At such times I cry, like Moses, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory; let me see the *gain* of Thy command before I go." But Thou sayest: "No, my child, *I* go before; the gain follows. I know there are things in the journey to appal thee. I have pointed thee to the red heights of Moriah; I have spread for thee the stone pillow of Bethel; I have prepared for thee the

lonely peak of Nebo. What then? Wilt thou insist *beforehand* on seeing the ram in the thicket? Wilt thou insist on beholding in *advance* the ladder from heaven? Wilt thou insist on having a *previous* view of the Promised Land? Nay, let my voice to thee *precede* my light. Plunge into the sea, and thy Christ will follow. Dive into the night, and the morning will follow. Stride into the desert, and the world will follow. Thy glory shall come *after* thee. Thy buried Christ shall meet thee in the evening. Thou shalt drink at twilight of that fountain which was sealed to thee at dawn."

"THE GROUND OF HUMAN HOPE"

"A promise being left us of entering into His rest."
—Hebrews iv. 1.

WHAT is my promise of entering into rest? It is not my possessions, but my wants. When you ask men the ground of their immortal hope they often point you to the powers of the human soul—proud reason, lofty imagination, clear judgment, far memory. That is a vain boast. To the inhabitant of another star these might seem but the movement of a midge's wing. My brother, you have mistaken the secret of your true dignity. It is not the sense of what you have, but the sense of what you have not, that makes you a man, that divides you from the beast of the field. What do you mean by a "boy of promise"? Not a boy who has reached great knowledge, but a boy who wants more knowledge than he can yet get; we call such "a

promising lad." Your heavenly Father has a like estimate—whether for boys or girls, for men or women. He measures your promise by your wants. Not he that is content with the treasures within his door is the Father's promising son. It is he that batters on the door and cries "Let me out, let me out; it is too narrow here, too dull, too lonely." The boy is above his environment. He is beyond his playthings, but not yet ready for his prizes. He is in the desert between Egypt and Canaan. Egypt is past; Canaan is not yet come; yet his cry is not to get back, but to get forward. The land of the Pyramids would not please him now. He has no rest in all the yesterdays; he wants something from to-morrow.

My Father, I understand now why it is to the "poor in spirit" that Christ promises the kingdom. The proof of my royalty is my unsatisfied soul. The promise of my rest is my *un*rest. My claim to Thee is my longing for Thee. I could not long for Thee if Thou wert not *in* me; my want is the shadow of Thy sunshine. I am the only creature on earth that is not content with its environment. The bird

carols all the day, and asks not larger wing. The fish swims upon the wave, and desires no friendlier bosom. The cattle browse in the meadow, and find the meadow ample room. But neither the air nor the water nor the land has been a rest to *me*. I have refused to sing where the lark sings—*outside* the gates of heaven. I have beat against the bars; I have demanded to get in. The gate that bars me from Thee has spoiled my song. My want of Thee is my prophecy of Thee. Why do I refuse to sing on the outside of the heavenly gate? Because *within* the gate is my Father's house, with its warm fires of welcome, with its many mansions of gold. My thirst for Thee is the cry for "home, sweet home;" and the cry is itself the promise that I shall enter into Thy rest.

"THE CONGRUITY BETWEEN PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER"

"What man is there of you whom, if his son ask bread, he will give him a stone?"—St. Matthew vii. 9.

MY brother, did you never ask bread in the *hope* of getting a stone? Did you never say "It is a very profitable thing to pray for the grace of Christ; it brings worldly riches"? And then, when in answer to your prayer for bread the stone has not come, have you never said something like this: "What is the use of being a Christian? Where is the profit of my prayers? I have never ceased morning nor evening to ask for the Spirit of Christ. In darkness and at dawn I have not forgotten to bend the knee. From the burden of each day I have ever stolen some stray moments for my Father. What have I gained by it? Nothing. My neighbour across

the street never prays; and year by year he is adding to his earthly store. But *I* have no increase in the golden stream. The purple and the fine linen come not, spite of my prayers for grace. The ships are not more laden with my merchandise. The orders are not more frequent at my counting-house. The visitors are not more fashionable at my dwelling. I might as well be a Pagan for all that I have gained. 'I have washed my hands in innocency, and cleansed my heart in vain.'"

Be still, my soul; thou hast searched the wrong casket for thy gem. Didst thou think that thy Father was going to mock thee—to send thee a trinket instead of a jewel! Didst thou not ask a ring—an adoption ring—the right to say "my Father"! Would it be an answer to that prayer if He should start a charitable subscription for thee! Wouldst thou be fed by charity when thou art a king's son! Thou hast asked admission into His audience chamber; murmurest thou that He brings thee not into the *servants' hall!* Thou has asked communion with Himself; complainest thou that He sends not His *vassals* to bear His mes-

sage! Thou hast asked to see Him face to face; weepest thou that He has refused to thee a *veil!* I have read that Mary came to seek the dead body of Jesus, and found instead a *living* Lord; and I can understand her glad surprise. But wouldst thou, my soul, reverse the picture; wouldst thou supplicate for a living Lord, and mourn because there came not a *lifeless* body! Men say thy sin is pride; nay, it is humility. Thou art not ambitious enough, not soaring enough. Thine expectation is less than thine asking. Thy hope is too modest; thine aim is too low. Thou art made for the ladder of angels, and thou art content with the pillow of stone; lift up thine eyes, O my soul!

"THE FIRST RECOGNITION OF CHRIST"

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."—John i. 11, 12.

THE earliest requirement of Jesus was "faith in His name." "Faith in His name" meant originally "faith that He would *make* His name." That is ever the earliest need of the great—that some one shall foresee their future glory. The man of letters needs it from his publisher, the artist from his academy. And those most hard to convince are always "one's own." They are too near, too familiar. Have they not seen you walking about the streets of Nazareth! Do they not know your parents! Are they not passing every day your scene of human toil! How can one so very accessible be anything great! Our relatives may be the most kind to us; but

it is outsiders who first discern our *promise*. Who first detected that your little girl was a musical genius? A stranger. Her voice was too familiar to you to excite wonder. She was so much a child of Nazareth, she was so "subject to her parents," that the foreign element escaped you. Your eye had been so long fixed on the casket that you forgot to study the gem. But the eye of the stranger caught it. He said: "Do you know the treasure which you have? Are you aware that this voice will be heard of, talked of? Have you realised the pride, the privilege of your possession? Are you conscious that you are hiding in your dwelling a pearl of great price, that, if the world knew, it would gather round your door in hundreds, in thousands? Why did you not tell me that this was a land of gold!"

Jesus, I bless those who trusted Thee *before* Thou hadst made Thy name—who had *faith* in Thy name; the greatest Book in the world would never have been published but for them. It is easy to praise Thy name *now;* that is knowledge, not faith. The world has gone after Thee; all men have bowed down before

Thee. But *then* Thou wert a tender plant and a root out of dry ground. I bless those who had sight enough to see Thee. I bless Nicodemus who took Thee up when dead. I bless Joseph of Arimathea who hoped over Thy grave. I bless Magdalene who brought spices to Thy lifeless form. I bless the penitent thief who saw Thy kingdom on Thy Cross. It was only genius that could see Thee at such an hour. Doubtless, had *I* been there, I should have echoed Pilate's laugh, "Art *thou* a king!" *I* began to worship when the world began to praise. But the men of the night, the men who recognised Thee in the shadows—these have the glory. Crown them, for they have crowned *me*. Exalt their memory, for they have exalted *me*. Keep green their wreath of fame, for they saw amid the night the gift that enriches *me*.

"THE REVELATION THAT RETARDED"

"And the Lord appeared unto Isaac and said, Go not down into Egypt."—Genesis xxvi. 2.

WE are in the habit of thinking that every revelation of God must expand our vision. It is a mistake. God sometimes reveals Himself by *contracting* our view. It was so here. He appeared to Isaac in the form of a stone wall. Isaac wanted to branch out—to go into Egypt. Going to Egypt was like going to Paris; it was a seeing of the world. God said "stay where you are; I will not let you go." It was not the sort of thing a young man would expect from a Divine apparition. If he were told God was about to appear to him, he would say in his heart, "I shall now be directed to a wider field of enterprise." What would be his astonishment if the revelation said, "Go back to your primitive

field, your childhood's field!" That is just what happened to Isaac. He had planned the making of his fortune. He was on the road to the land of his dreams—the land of Egypt; doubtless he said to himself, "Providence leads me." Suddenly Providence appeared and shut the door. God said, "Keep where you are—in this humble sphere where there are no trappings of wealth, no flights of promotion, no rapid openings into glory; I have decreed for you a *village* life."

My brother, never let the obscurity of thy lot tempt thee to say "my way is hid from the Lord." I have heard thee lamenting the gates that were closed to thee. Hast thou lost an appointment? Our *dis*appointments are often God's *appointments*. Art thou stretched upon a bed of pain while the world sweeps by to take your place, to gather your prizes? So was it with Jacob on the night of Bethel long ago. Doubtless he fretted and fumed, and arraigned the Eternal Justice; doubtless he cursed the pillow that robbed him of his chance in the race. Poor, short-sighted soul! that invalid couch was the birth of thy glory. The night

that shut thee in secured thine immortality. The weariness that prostrated thee lifted thee into fame. The sleep that overwhelmed thee redeemed thee from oblivion. Thy silent hour was thy most crowded hour. Men said, "he is buried underground;" so is the railway train when it makes leaps in its journey. Thine underground moments have been thine accelerated moments. Not by thy days of earthly splendour shall the world remember thee. Not by thy triumphs in the chase, not by thy tradings in the market-place, not even by thy patriarchal birthright, shall men preserve the memory of thy name. Thou shalt be known by that invalid couch, where, in the midst of thy proud career, thy Father's message *barred* thine onward way.

"THE REVELATION THAT REWARDED"

"And the Lord appeared unto Isaac the same night."
Genesis xxvi. 24.

"APPEARED the same night"—the night on which he went up to Beersheba. Do you think this revelation was an accident? Do you think the *time* of it was an accident? Do you think it could have happened on any other night as well as this? If so, you are grievously mistaken. Why did it come to Isaac in the night on which he reached Beersheba? Because that was the night on which he reached *rest*. In his old locality he had been tormented. There had been a whole series of petty quarrels about the possession of paltry wells. There are no worries like *little* worries, particularly if there is an accumulation of them. Isaac felt this. Even after the strife was past, the place retained a

disagreeable association. He determined to leave. He sought change of scene—a spot where there would be nothing to remind him of the old troubles. He pitched his tent away from the place of former strife. That very night the revelation came. God spoke when there was no inward storm. He could not speak when the mind was fretted; His voice demands the silence of the soul. Only in the *hush* of the spirit could Isaac hear the garments of his God sweep by. His *still* night was his *starry* night.

My soul, hast thou pondered these words, "Be still, and know"! In the hour of perturbation thou canst not hear the answer to thy prayers. How often has the answer seemed to come long after! The heart got no response in the moment of its crying—in its thunder, its earthquake, and its fire. But when the crying ceased, when the stillness fell, when thy hand desisted from knocking on the iron gate, when the interest of *other* lives broke the tragedy of thine own, then appeared the long delayed reply. *Why* so long delayed? Because it is only in the cool of the day that the

voice of the Lord God is heard walking in the garden. Would'st thou hear that voice, O my soul? Get thee up to Beersheba—up to the land of rest. Did not thy Lord before distributing the loaves "command the multitude to *sit down*"! Thou too must sit down ere thou canst be fed. Thou must *rest* if thou wouldst have thy heart's desire. It comes not to the heart on the wing. Cease thy migrations. Pause in thy flight. Arrest thy wanderings. Still the beating of thy pulse of personal care. Hide thy tempest of individual trouble behind the altar of a common tribulation. And, that same night, the Lord shall appear to thee. Heaven shall open to the dove-like spirit. The rainbow shall span the place of the subsiding flood; and in thy stillness thou shalt hear the everlasting music.

"SPIRITUAL PRESERVATION

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
1 Peter i. 5.

I UNDERSTAND St. Peter to mean "we are kept from going wrong by the power of looking forward—by faith in the nearness of a coming revelation." Nothing hinders the sustaining of goodness like monotony—the want of a prospect. It is easier to be good at the beginning than in the middle. Why? Not because the middle has more *dangers,* but because it has less *freshness,* "while the bridegroom *tarried* they all slumbered and slept." Peter himself is the finest example of this. He was always courting danger. Why? Because he felt that a monotonous life would lead him into temptation. A monotonous life does not mean a want of something to *do,* but a want of something to think of. I do not agree with Dr. Watts' lines:—

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle *hands* to do."

It is not the idle hands, but the idle minds, that are in danger. I should say the dreams of *youth* are times of idle hands; but I should not regard them as special seasons of temptation. The *mind* is then full. There is a vision of glory everywhere. Faith is singing in every meadow; hope is budding in every flower; love is shouting over the withered autumn leaves "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory!"

Let me dream again, O Christ; revive for me the vision of the morning. It may have been a time of idle hands; but it was Elijah's chariot to me—it held me aloft, it kept me pure. Canst Thou give me back my vanished youth? Yes; what is Thy Life Eternal but vanished youth restored! The thing which kept me pure in the morning was always the vision of the evening—the golden sky that should come with ripest years. Renew that vision, O Christ. Why should my nature droop because I recede from the morning? Was not my glory always in the *west;* did not I ever say "at *evening*

time there shall be light"? It was always to "the last time" that I looked for my revelation of glory. Let me look again. It was always the west that made the east so charming; my morning was lighted by the evening star. Light me still by that star, O Lord. Lift me out of the mid-day by the vision of the climax. Give me something to look forward to. Break the monotony of the stream. Renew the rainbow in the waters. Draw aside the curtains of the golden west, and let faith look through. My feet shall be kept from the mire when I see the good time coming.

"GOD'S PLACE FOR ADVERSITY"

"What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?"—Malachi iii. 14.

THERE is no profit in walking mournfully. All the profit a man ever gets is from his joy. The advantage of the fires of sorrow does not lie in the things which they consume, but in the things which they cannot consume. The sweetest of all the uses of adversity is to show me the joy which it cannot take away. There is a substance which fire will not destroy; it is like the bush Moses saw in the wilderness. I could never have its quality proved except *by* fire. Yet the blessing is not the fire, but the unconsumedness. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego passed through the furnace and got no hurt. What was to them the benefit of the furnace? Precisely the limit of its power—what it could *not* do. Doubtless in things not vital there *was*

damage done. The men were cast in bound and they came out loose; there was destruction to the *environment.* But it was not this that made the furnace beneficial. It was the untouched thing, the unsinged thing, the unharmed thing. The glory of the furnace was its failure. The glory of all sorrow, where it has glory, is its failure. I could not praise the setting of the sun if it did not bring out the beauty of the evening star.

My soul, why deemest thou that thy *grief* is pleasing to thy Father! There is nothing pleasing to thy Father but thy joy. What He searches for in thy heart is not the pain, but the pearl. He longs to see the *tenacity* of thy joy—its inability to be extinguished. Why was Jesus His well-beloved? Because He was the man of sorrows? Nay; but because all His sorrows could not quench His joy. Hast thou not read that under the shadow of the cross He cried "*my* peace I give unto you"? That *peace,* not the pain, was the Father's pearl. It was not the *cloud* of Jesus, but the *bow* in His cloud, that made His Father glad. So it is with thee, O my soul. Why does thy Father send

thee the cloud? To test the immortality of thy joy, to prove whether the bow can abide in the flood, to see if the dove can live on the waters. Why bring Him the willow when He craves for the rose? Why send Him the cypress when He seeks for the laurel? Why offer Him the dirge when He asks for the song? He shades thy sun, not to see thy night, but to see thy candle—thy innermost source of joy. He appreciates thy bearing of grief because it is joy alone *can* bear. Thy fires to Him never become cleansing till He sees the gleam and glitter of the golden chain.

"SATAN'S CHOICE OF A LOCALITY"

Tempted of Satan in the wilderness."—Mark i. 13.

WE are apt to think that Satan is most powerful in crowded thoroughfares. It is a mistake. I believe the temptations of life are always most dangerous in the wilderness. I have been struck with that fact in Bible history. It is not in their most public moments that the great men of the past have fallen; it has been in their quiet hours. Moses never stumbled when he stood before Pharaoh, or while he was flying from Pharaoh; it was when he got into the *desert* that his patience began to fail. David never stumbled while he was fighting his way through opposing armies; it was when the fight was over, when he was resting quietly under his own vine, that he put forth his hand to steal. The sorest temptations are not those spoken, but those echoed. It is easier to lay aside your besetting sin amid

a cloud of witnesses than in the solitude of your own room. The sin that besets you is never so beseeching as when you are alone. You may say kind things in public to the man you hate; but you make up for it in the wilderness. It is our *thoughts* that hurt us; and we think most in solitude. Many a man who resists the temptation to drunkenness at the dinner-table is conquered at the secret hour. Paul says that the Christian armour is most needed after we have vanquished the outward foe, "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, *having done all,* to stand."

O Thou, who alone hast control over my thoughts, help me in the wilderness. Others can help me in the market-place. Others can advise me at the festive hour. Others can restrain me at the meeting of the multitude. But Thou alone canst help my *wilderness.* And it is there that I need Thy keeping, O Lord. I speak often of retiring from the vanities of life; yet it is in retirement that the vanities of life most come to me. My vain world is in my soul; the artist that paints it is my own heart. It is not when I go to the marriage feast of Cana

that I have most need of Thee; it is when I hear the music and the dancing, and, through envy of my brother, refuse to go in. This is my moment of worldliness because this is my desert moment—my separation from human sympathy. Meet me in my desert, O Christ, for it is my world of vanity. Meet me in my hour of separation from human interests. Meet me when I have lost the voices of the crowd. Meet me when I walk in the wilderness and strive to forget the cities of men. Meet me when I despair of the outer world, when I malign its streets and gates, when I despise its courts and palaces. The contact with my brother man will break the worldliness of the wilderness; dispel that wilderness, O Lord.

"A GROUNDLESS FEAR OF GOD"

"Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border."—Numbers xx. 21.

THE world has all along been refusing to let Christ through. It has never had room for Him within the inn; it has relegated Him to the manger. It wants Him to be kept apart. It is willing to visit Him occasionally in the manger—even, at times, to bring a little gold and frankincense. But it does not wish Him to become a force in its own affairs. Why so; what is it afraid of? The same thing which Edom feared. Edom was afraid that the hordes of Israel would tear up her cultivated fields and destroy her national produce. The world fears that Christ will tear up human instincts and make men unnatural. The world is wrong; we are never so natural as when we are Christians. What kills naturalness is self-consciousness; it makes

us either too confident or too shy. When I am too confident I am thinking about myself; when I am too shy I am equally thinking about myself. In both cases the mirror of myself is the prominent thing. What will break the mirror? A larger environment. Why are travelled people so nice? It is because they are so natural. And why are they so natural? It is because their eyes have rested on a wider sphere. They have forgot their own greatness; they have forgot their own humility; they have forgot to think about themselves at all—they have smashed their mirror.

So shall it be with thee, my soul, if thou wilt let Christ in. Thou shalt become for the first time perfectly natural. Thou shalt be a travelled man—the most travelled of all men. Before thee shall stretch the general assembly of the firstborn—the biggest scene in the universe. The things around thee shall lose their importance either as a cross or as a crown. Thou shalt forget to be proud, thou shalt forget to be humble. There shall come to thee a larger love, which shall destroy both vaunting and shrinking. Perfect health neither

says "I am sick" nor "I am well;" it is unconsciousness of its own breathing. So shall it be with thee when Christ shall enter in. Thou shalt become spontaneous, natural, free. Thine shall be the singing of the brook, the warbling of the bird, the kindling of the flower. There shall be no pausing for effect, no posing for attitudes, no angling for favour, no trying to *seem*. No more shalt thou study the right thing to say; it shall be given thee in the moment—love's moment. Thy goodness shall be grace—something native to thy life. Thy kindness shall be instinctive—born in thy blood. Thy sacrifice shall be unconscious—part of thy being. Thy service shall be easy—an expression of thine own heart. It is sin that has made thee unnatural; thou shalt be a child of nature again when thou hast let Christ in.

"THE HOTTEST PART OF LIFE'S FURNACE"

"Jesus suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."—Hebrews xiii. 12, 13.

THERE are two kinds of sorrow in this world. There is a sorrow which is incurred in the path of duty—a sorrow within the gate, within the camp. It consists in a soldier's fatigues, in a soldier's wounds. But there is a sorrow which seems to *debar* from the path of duty—which comes to us *outside* the gate, outside the camp. It consists in a soldier being stricken by sickness ere the campaign opens, held back from the service of his country. When this latter happens to any of us we are very perplexed in mind; we seem to have been thwarted by heaven. We feel as if our fellow-men were reproaching us for being cast upon their hands,

blaming us for being a burden to the world. The sorrow in the path of duty could be tolerated; but it is hard to bear that sense of reproach which comes from the sorrow outside the camp.

My afflicted brother, the writer of this passage has a great comfort for you. He says that Christ's case was one like yours. He bids you in such moments of depression to come into the Garden of Gethsemane. There you will see a sufferer whose sorrow was outside the camp. He bore no visible wound, no mark of shot or shell. He carried no scar that told of battle won. It seemed to those around Him that He had never *joined* the battle. He bore the reproach of being a burden on the world, of doing nothing to win the kingdom for humanity, of leading a life useless to man. Yet, my brother, no service was ever like the service of that sick-bed. In His seeming uselessness He was doing gigantic work, herculean work, world work. When I want to measure His work I go to the Garden—the place of seeming uselessness. I do not go to His crowded moments—to the multitude that thronged His

breaking of bread, to the concourse that swelled His audience on the Hill. No; I go down to His lonely hour—I and the world together. I and the world *magnify* that moment when men said He was laid aside, shunted, left behind. We find it the brightest day of all His golden year. We crown Him with the flowers of His Gethsemane; we load Him with the wreaths of His Calvary; we keep as His natal day the night on which He was betrayed. Ye who are suffering outside the camp, rest with Him in the Garden awhile.

"CHRISTIAN EMULATION"

"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church."—1 Cor. xiv. 12.

"SEEK to excel." What a strange precept for a gospel of love! Is not the wish to excel, a very bad thing? Is it not the root of most of the evil in the world? Is it not the cause of jarrings and jealousies and jostlings? Does it not raise heart-burnings different from those of the disciples on the road to Emmaus? Yes; but look at the passage again. Look at the reason given for the precept: Forasmuch as ye are zealous of *spiritual* gifts. Paul says if they had been zealous for *material* gifts he would have given very different advice. To excel in a material gift means to excel *others*. The possession of outward fame depends on your superiority; the beauty of a particular type of face lies in its rarity.

But to excel in spiritual gifts is not to excel *others;* it is to surpass our former *selves.* The value of a spiritual gift depends on its diffusiveness—on the number of people that have it besides myself. Joy dies unless it is shared. Love breaks the heart unless it is reciprocated. Knowledge makes a solitude if it is possessed by one alone—the solitude of the Son of Man. The gold of the outward world is precious from its scarcity; but the gold of the kingdom of God grows precious as it becomes ample.

My soul, wouldst thou know whether thy gift is spiritual or temporal? Ask thyself the question, *Why* do I wish to excel in it? Is it that men may say, "He walketh among the golden candlesticks; he is the chief among ten thousand"? Then thy gift is temporal—a poor fragile, earthly thing. But is it that thou mayst make *others* rich? Is it that thou mayst share with those around thee? Is it that men may *cease* to say of thee, 'He is the chief among ten thousand"? Is it that thou mayst make thy brother glad? Is it that thy voice may cheer the toiling, that thy song may brighten the invalid, that thy reading may instruct the

blind, that thy painted flower may gladden the infirmary, that thy music may beguile a sister's hour of weariness, that thy poetry may kindle the aspiring of drooping souls? Then is thy gift spiritual, whatever it may be. Be it stone and lime, be it verse and rhyme, be it earth and time, if it is meant for "the edifying of the Church" it is a gift of the Spirit of God.

"THE REAL WORLD"

"Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things; 'See,' saith He, 'that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount.'"

Hebrews viii. 5.

WE speak of the dead as being in the land of shadows. "Shades of the dead" is a familiar expression; it suggests that the next life is an unreal life. The view of the writer to the Hebrews is exactly the opposite. To him the spiritual world is the only real world, and the natural world is the land of shadows. Instead of the future life being a sleep in which we shall dream of earth, earth is a sleep in which we dream of the future life. We sometimes ask whether we shall carry any pictures with us beyond the grave. This writer says we have fallen into a strange misconception. We think of heaven as needing the photographs of earth to wake earthly mem-

ory. He says that earthly objects are themselves the photographs of *heaven*. The Mount of God does not need to be made after the pattern of the human; the human has already been fashioned after the pattern of the Mount of God.

My soul, hast thou weighed the comfort of this revelation! Often have I heard thee say, "What if the future should be to me a foreign land!" Often have I heard thee ask, "Is there anything which man will carry over from earth to heaven?" Hast thou reflected what God has carried over from heaven to earth! Hast thou considered that the best within thee is only the shadow of something more substantial! Hast thou pondered the heavenly origin of things which thou callest earthly realities! Thou speakest of earthly ties—the ties of family and home. Where did these come from? From the Fatherhood of God, from the Sonship of Christ. Thou speakest of the marriage ring. Where did that come from? From the bridal supper of the Lamb. Thou speakest of the joys of love. Where did these come from? From the Love that passeth knowledge. Thou

speakest of the sights of beauty. Where did these come from? From Him who is fairer than the children of men. Thou speakest of thy career of ambition. Where did that come from? From the Son of Man ascending to His Father. O my soul, thou hast mistaken thy true home; *heaven* is thy home. Thou art not going to travel at *death;* thou art travelling now. *This* is thy foreign land. What thou callest present reality is but a memory—an echo of far-off bells. Death will not reach the *bells;* it will only make thee independent of the echo. The distance makes the sound a mere reflection; thou shalt hear the actual chimes when thou shalt reach home.

"CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY"

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2 Cor. xi. 3.

THE simplicity spoken of is not simplicity of thought but simplicity of choice. When Christ bids us "receive the kingdom as a child" He is not asking simplicity of thought. Children are not simple in thought. Look at the fearful questions they put—"Who made God?" "Where do the figures go when they are rubbed off the slate?"—questions for the philosopher, for the scientist. But children are very simple in their *choice*. A child never sees more than two alternatives; a thing is either good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. Paul says that in the moral world man has lost that simplicity; the serpent has beguiled him as it did Eve. How did

the serpent beguile Eve? By obscuring the simplicity of the question at issue. Sin would never succeed unless it first obscured the question. Would any man hesitate between God and Satan if the simple alternatives were placed before him! But then the simple alternatives are never placed before him. The lower world is always painted in fair colours. It has stolen the flowers of Paradise and claimed them as its own. I never choose sin because it looks bad, but because it looks manly. The danger of sin is its counterfeit of glory. Satan in the wilderness is quite a Christian. He says to Christ, "If you follow me I will help you to fulfil your mission more quickly." So speaks to all youth the hour of temptation.

Help me, O Lord, to unclothe the tempter —to divest him of his disguise. Much of my service to *him* is an unconscious homage to *Thee*. I mistake the altar on which I lay my flowers. I have never said, either with heart or lip, "Let me build a temple to Satan." If I loved Satan I should have said it long ago. But I have loved Thee, and Thee only. I have seen in the grounds of the tempter things that

were "pleasant to the eyes;" but they were all stolen from *Thy* garden; their perfume was the perfume of Eden. Let me regain the simplicity of the child's vision—not shallowness of view but depth of contrast. Let me cease to call duelling an affair of honour, war a military glory, atheism a freedom of thought, immorality a life of pleasure, drunkenness an hour of good-fellowship. Let me cease to clothe the bird of night in the plumes of the bird of paradise. Give me the child's uncompromising power of choice—"I like this," "I do not like that." Let me see the King in His beauty; let me behold the slave in his deformity. May Thy day have no cloud; may the tempter's night have no star. I shall reach the power of childhood when I have learned the simplicity of a choice betwixt *two*.

"RELIGION AND IMMORTALITY"

"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore."—Psalm cxv. 17, 18.

I SHOULD be disposed to call this the earliest Jewish argument for the immortality of the soul. I understand the Psalmist to mean: "If the end of man were death, he would not during life have the instinct of praise. A race of mortals destined to nothing but mortality would be a race silent to religion. Men designed for the dust would not lift their eyes and their voices in worship. The fact that we do lift our eyes in worship is a proof that the grave is not our goal." Nor does it seem to me that the Psalmist reasons badly. Why should man have a faculty above his environment! If he is made exclusively for this world, why should he seek another! If death ends all, I have a sense here that I do not

need. I need all other of my senses here. I need the eye, the ear, the hand, the taste, the thrill of joy, the instinct of fear—above all, that balance of the whole called *common*-sense. But I do not need the sense of another world; it is useless to me, it impedes me. I require the earthly hunger to guide me to the earthly food; but if there be no future, where shall the heavenly hunger guide me! Only to the depths of despair. Where has that heavenly hunger come from? I cry for earthly bread because I am prepared for that bread, because that bread is prepared for me. But if there be no preparation for a future in my soul, why does my soul cry for it! Wherefore should an accent of praise come from those who go down into silence!

I thank Thee, O Father, that there is a voice within me which contradicts the silence of death. I thank Thee for my necessity to pray. It is the only gift that comes to me direct from Thee. I never got it from the earth nor from aught that was earthly. It has been strongest in me just where the world was weakest. It has come to me most powerfully when the roses

have faded and the trees are bereft of their green. It has often been the last survivor in my soul. It has lived when the world has died. It has come to me when the flower has lost its perfume and the bird has ceased to sing. Like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, I have seen *Thee* when the cloud has fallen on all beside; I have seen Thee and I have cried to Thee. My cry to Thee has been like the ark in the flood; it has risen above a submerged world. Therefore, O Father, it is my olive branch of peace. It tells me I have something that will not die, not go down to silence. My rainbow of hope has come from my path of tears; I have learned in my tears what things the deluge cannot drown. They that praise Thee shall praise Thee forever.

"THE PRINCIPLE OF HEAVENLY RANK"

"Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's."—1 Cor. xv. 23.

THE influence of caste would seem to be ineradicable. We are told that God has levelled down all men in a common condemnation; yet here we read "every man shall rise in his own order." Why not? If you were to reduce all men to one level to-day, they would be quite unequal to-morrow; the best men would come to the front in a few hours. "But," you say, "I expected better things of *heaven*. I thought in the other world we should be done with all this cutting and carving, this separation of masses and classes, this raising of barriers between man and man. How it disappoints me to hear that a man has to keep his own order!" Nay but, my brother, what *is* the order? *Who* are those that are to

stand in front of the throne? It is the men of sacrifice—the men who have most power to *burst* the barriers. Christ is "the first-fruits" because Christ has gone deepest down. Then come "they that are Christ's"—they that have washed their robes in the blood of self-forgetfulness. Behind them are the rank and file—those who are still unfit for service, who *themselves* need to be served. These are the invalids of the camp; they require to be waited upon; they go not forth to battle against sin and Satan. In the present world they would have been called the people of means, people of independence, people who keep attendants; but in the coming world the attendants themselves are to have the first room.

Prepare me for my heavenly rank, O Lord! Thou hast said that the least shall be greatest in Thy Kingdom; prepare me for my coming high position. I speak of preparing for death; that is an easy thing; I have only to practise torpor. But the hard thing is to practise for that which makes *heavenly greatness*. I could easily make ready for earthly greatness; I should learn to domineer in a week. But to

serve, to help, to minister, to perform menial offices, to retire into the shade that another's light may shine—that needs a long education. I have often wondered why helpful souls are taken away by death. I do not wonder any more. I leave school when I am fit for *this* world; the ministrant souls leave school when they are fit for *Thy* world; they are the ripest fruits of the garden, and they are ripened by fire. The front flowers are Thy Gethsemane flowers—Thy Passion flowers. My place in the New Jerusalem will be determined by my conquest of exclusiveness; and nothing conquers exclusiveness like pain. They who have passed through the furnace of earth come out to Thee unbound. They are freed from the shackles of all caste; therefore they are the prime-*ministers* of Thy Kingdom.

"RENEWAL IN CHRIST"

"He that sat upon the throne said 'Behold, I make all things new.'"—Rev. xxi. 5.

TO make things new is not the same as to make new things. To make new things is the work of the hand; to make things new is the work of the heart. Whenever one sits upon the throne of the heart, all things are made new. They are made so without changing a line, without altering a feature. Enthrone in your heart an object of love, and you have renewed the universe. You have given an added note to every bird, a fresh joy to every brook, a fairer tint to every flower. The greater part of this world is painted from within. Its deepest colours are given to the eye by the heart; when the heart grows pale, nature grows wan. When Christ sits upon the throne of the heart, He brings roses to the *field*. He does not make new things, but He makes

things new. I do not think we are aware how much the value of a *thing* depends upon a *thought*. What is the difference between the wound inflicted by the surgeon and the wound inflicted by the malefactor? It is a thought—the difference between a purpose of pain and a purpose of mercy. Such is the change which, to me, Christ makes on this world. It is a mental change—altering the physical view. It is just the difference between a purpose of pain and a purpose of love. I once thought the ills of life were messages of vengeance—the thunderbolts of a vindictive God. But when Christ mounted my heart's throne, the thunderbolts became musical. Death was a chariot to bear me home. Pain was an operation to heal disease. Bereavement was a lifting of my treasures to a safer bank. Poverty was the test of my love. Clouds were the trial of my faith. Surprise was the proof of my patience. The fires of life were the cleansing of the golden chain.

O Thou who art seated upon the throne of the heart, my knowledge of Thy love has made all things fair. The emerald rainbow of my

soul has put new lights in the sky. Yesterday the whole creation was groaning and travailing in spirit; but it was in spirit, not in fact; it was a thought in the *soul* that put sackcloth on the *sky*. To-day there has come a new thought to my soul; and creation groans no more. The world has caught fire from the joy of my love; the heavens declare its glory; the earth showeth its handiwork. Not only does the *day* sing it; the very night reflects it. Dark places have caught the glow of Thy presence. Every valley has been exalted; service has been ennobled, sacrifice has been beautified, patient suffering has been reverenced, humility has been made regal, self-restraint has been glorified, the sharing of sorrow has been called blessed, the surrender of the will has been called Divine. The virtues of the vale have become the merits of the mount; the poor in spirit have the kingdom, the meek have the inheritance, the sacrificial have the comfort, the unsatisfied have the promise, the merciful have the crown, the peacemakers have the royalty, the martyrs for truth have the empire over all. Jesus, the very thought of Thee has made this world new!

"THE SLAVERY WHICH GLORIFIES"

"Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

THIS is the only note of triumph I have ever heard sounded over the condition of a slave. Is it not a marvellous note? "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; ye are the property of another; therefore glorify your master in your body and in your spirit." Can slavery glorify either a servant or his master! Can it glorify the body; does it not bring weariness! Can it glorify the spirit; does it not bring depression! How could Paul thus speak of a slave! Because there is one kind of slavery which does glorify both the servant and the master; it is love. The heart is never glorified till it gets an owner. Before that time body and spirit are very listless. But when the owner comes, when love

comes, then body and spirit leap up together; the eye sparkles; the cheek mantles; the feet bound; the laugh rings; the pulse beats quicker; the yoke becomes easy, and the burden light. There is no homage to the master of a heart like the *glory* of that heart. When it brightens at his presence, when it leaps at his approach, he is glorified. He would not feel his ownership complete if it did not bring this glory, for the proof of *my* mastery over *your* heart is the gleam and glitter of its chain.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for this one slavery—the bondage of my heart. It is the charter of my glory. All the beauty of my heart lies in its chain; it sparkles most where it is bound. Never let there come to me an emancipation of the *heart*. I would have freedom in all else. Let the hands be free, let the mind be free, let the will be free; but let the heart ever have its chain. Thou whose name is Love, let me ever be *Thy* bondsman. I would not be the bondsman of any power but Thee. There are things in which I should always like to be independent. I should not like my body to be fettered; I should not wish my reason to be bound. But

I should always covet *Thy* chain—Love's chain. I should not wish the independence of the *heart*. I should not like to have nobody to care for. I should not desire my affections to escape from the cage and be free. Love, Divine Love, Immortal Love, be *Thou* the master of my soul!

"THE RELATION OF THEISM TO CHRISTIANITY"

"Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."—John vi. 45.

THE idea is that if a man believe in a personal God he ought, if he would be logical, to accept Christianity. Every man that has learned of the *Father* should, in strict reason, come to the Son also. There are men who call themselves Deists. They say, "Have we not a God of nature—a God who meets the eye; why supplement that faith by a mystery?" Jesus answers "to *clear away* a mystery—the *silence* of this God of nature." The God of nature meets the *eye;* why does not He also meet the ear? Nature, you say, teaches you that there is a *Father.* It is well; but why does not that Father speak? I can understand one *losing* sight of a heavenly Father; but I cannot understand one having

Him in sight and yet believing in His *silence*. Can you imagine any father sitting beside his little boy from morn to eve and never uttering a word? He *could* not; he would be *bound* to speak. It would be quite immaterial whether he said anything *new*. Love rarely does say anything new; but it delights to repeat its *old* things. It is not the *revelation* that is important; it is the revealing, the breaking of the silence, the communion of soul with soul.

And so, my Father, is it with Thee. I do not know whether in the voice of Jesus Thou hast told me any new secret about the universe. It is Thy voice itself that breaks the *great* secret. I have received little light on old mysteries. Thou hast told me nothing new about the origin of life. Thou hast left unsolved the enigmas of space and time. But Thou hast *spoken*. Thou hast said, "I am here;" that is all; but that is heaven. I care not so much what Thou sayest as that I should hear Thy voice. The revelation I want from Thee is the revealing of Thy love. I care not though it should only tell the old, old story. I reck not though it should unbar no secret, though it should unclasp no mys-

tery. Only let it speak—speak truisms, speak platitudes, speak repetitions. Only let it sound a note in the silence—a note which shall say, "I am with you, I remember you, I love you." Its reiterations will be the dearest message of all; its repetitions willl be the sweetest message of all; its old, old story will be the gladdest message of all. My love will never weary of hearing the refrain of Thine; therefore, even though nature had told me all, I should still welcome the voice of Jesus.

"A SINGULAR CHANGE OF FASHION"

"The world is gone after Him."—John xii. 19.

IT is not often that fashion originates in the *provinces*. It is not often that the metropolitan press sustains the reputation of a book or singer on the authority of provincial journals. It is the lower that take their fashion from the higher. Imagine Belgravia eagerly enquiring for the latest culture of Bohemia! Yet here is a complete transformation of the higher by the lower. When Christ came He was the *opposite* of the fashion. *Cæsar* was the fashion. They were the extremes of the social ladder. Cæsar was proud; Christ was lowly. Cæsar was sceptred; Christ was scourged. Cæsar had the crown of empire; Christ had the crown of thorns. Yet Christ is now at the top, and Cæsar is nowhere. That is what Paul means by "the fashion of this age passeth away." "The fashion of this age"

means "the fashion of the Roman Empire." We have lived to see it pass; we have lived to see its opposite enthroned. There has come a new ideal of manliness—a reversed ideal. The chaplet once was woven for the men who strike; it is now wreathed for the men who bear. The mountain virtues are the things once called poor-spirited—courage in sorrow, meekness in trial, mercy in judgment, peacemaking in strife, purity in temptation; these are our patterns on the modern mount.

And they are all from Thee, O Jesus! Thou hast changed the fashion of the world, nay, the fashion of my dream. I have come to admire what I once despised—all through *Thee*. It is my love for Thee that has changed my standard of greatness. It is because I have been down with Thee in Gethsemane; it is because I have climbed with Thee the steep of Calvary. It is not the altered fashion that has glorified *Thee;* it is the glory of Thee that has altered the *fashion*. I pass along the old road and behold great changes. I see no decrepit children put out to die. I meet no helpless invalids left to starve. I encounter no demoniacs walking

neglected amid the tombs. I behold no deaf or blind crowding the highway for want of a home. I find no slave standing in the market for sale. I miss, above all, the streaming throng that used to follow the wrestlers in the ring. And when I ask, "Where are they all gone—these once admiring crowds?" some pilgrim of the way points to the road *Thou* hast taken, and says "the world has gone after *Him*."

"THE ARCHITECTURE OF MAN"

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God. Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God."
2 Cor. v. 1, 5.

I UNDERSTAND the meaning to be that man was not made, or "wrought," for the present world, but for another world; we are living in a shifting tabernacle, and we have the furniture of a permanent building. There are three sets of houses with which we come in contact; two of them are quite intelligible; the third is always a puzzle. There is the small house with poor furniture; we know that this means the life of toil. There is the large house with grand furniture; we know that this means the life of riches. But there is a third—the *small* house with grand furniture; and this mystifies us. There is an incongruity about it. We feel that the furniture was not made for

the edifice—that it was meant for another and a better edifice. So it is with man. The most pronounced feature about him is his incongruity. He is not a miserable creature; he is not a divine being; he is a mixture of both. He is a little house with gigantic pretensions. The furnishing is quite inappropriate to the edifice. The edifice is a shifting tabernacle with no permanent resting-place. But in front of it there are magnificent grounds laid out—grounds which must be lost unless there be a permanent building. The grounds are the aspirations in front of reality. We are confined within a narrow space; but we are seeking nothing less than a Christ.

Yes, Thou fair Christ, I am in search of *Thee!* From my tiny window I stretch out my hands to catch the heavens. It is not only in what men call *religion* that I seek Thee: all my aspirings are aspirings after *Thee.* In the study of art I am seeking *Thee;* I am in search of a perfect beauty. In the reading of fiction I am seeking *Thee;* I am trying to figure a life fairer than the children of men. In the love of music I am seeking *Thee;* I am striving to

imagine a harmony deeper than that of the spheres. *Thou* art the inappropriate garden in front of my tabernacle. Therefore I know that I have a *building* somewhere. I know that these permanent grounds would never be laid out for a shifting tent. I know that the electric light would never have been furnished for a house which cannot stay. Thou wouldst not build a massive ship if the sea were to be dried up. I behold as yet no trace of the waters; but the ship is already here; *that* is my hope of glory.

"THE VEILING OF GOD'S FACE"

"He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it."—Job xxvi. 9.

A HIDING of God's sovereignty is a startling thing. We can understand a hiding of His *beauty,* for the beauty of the minor chord may only appear in the symphony. We can understand a hiding of His *counsels,* for we in our ignorance might not see the good of them. But we should always like to see His *sovereignty.* The most startling thing about the hiding here spoken of is its deliberateness. If it were merely said that man cannot *fathom* God, we should accept it as a truism. But it is God Himself who here designs the unfathomableness. There is a double act of concealment. He first "holds back the face of His throne," and then "spreads a cloud over it." It is an elaborate movement for veiling; and it disturbs us. But consider *what*

is veiled. Is it really the throne of God? No, it is only the face of the throne. The face of the throne is that which looks forward; it is God's sovereignty seen in advance. He will not reveal *that*. He will reveal the *side* of His throne —He will give strength for the present need. He will reveal the *back* of His throne—He will let us see His providence in retrospect. But He will not show us the *face* of His throne; He spreads a cloud over the future glory.

And is this not well for thee, O my soul! Thy Father does not wish to *compel* thee to come in; He would have thee come by thine own will. Therefore He conceals the glory. How could any man *resist* the glory—the face of the throne of God! Would not such a vision rob thee of thy freedom! Who would not climb the hill of God if it were always crowned with sunshine! If there is too much *light* there can be no test of *love*. It is easy for thee to seek thy God when thou seest the rainbow of emerald and the blaze of sapphire. But if the rainbow were extinguished, if the sapphire blaze were quenched, if the face of His throne were covered, couldst thou seek Him *then?* If it were

to be proclaimed that there would be no judgment-seat, no books opened, no partition between the right hand and the left, would virtue be to thee *still* as beautiful? Couldst thou choose her in plain attire? Couldst thou love her without God's adoption ring? Couldst thou wed her with no material dowry? Couldst thou cherish her with no hope of reward? Couldst thou work for her, toil for her, sacrifice for her, though through the midnight air there came no murmur of the approaching song "Good and faithful servant, well done"? Then hast thou vindicated the silence of God; then mayst thou bless thy Father that He has held back from thee the face of His throne.

"THE MEN WHO HAVE NO WORK"

"Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder."—Matt. xxvi. 36.

IT is a hard thing to be kept in the background at a time of crisis. In the Garden of Gethsemane eight of the eleven disciples were left to do nothing. Jesus went to the front to pray; Peter, James, and John went to the middle to watch; the rest sat down in the rear to wait. Methinks that party in the rear must have murmured. They were *in* the garden, but that was all; they had no share in the cultivation of its flowers. It was a time of crisis, a time of storm and stress; and yet they were not suffered to work. You and I have often felt that experience, that disappointment. There has arisen, mayhap, a great opportunity for Christian service. Some are sent to the front; some are sent to the middle. But *we* are made to lie down in the rear. Perhaps

sickness has come; perhaps poverty has come; perhaps obloquy has come; in any case we are hindered and we feel sore. We do not see why we should be excluded from a part in the Christian life. It seems an unjust thing that, seeing we have been allowed to enter the garden, no path should be assigned to us there.

Be still, my soul, it is not as thou deemest! Thou are *not* excluded from a part of the Christian life. Thinkest thou that the garden of the Lord has only a place for those who walk and for those who stand! Nay, it has a spot consecrated to those who are compelled to *sit*. There are three voices in a verb—active, passive, and neuter. So, too, are there three voices in Christ's verb "to live." There are the active, wrestling souls, who go to the front, and struggle till the breaking of the day. There are the passive, watching souls, who stand in the middle, and report to others the progress of the fight. But there are also the neuter souls—those who can neither fight nor be spectators of the fight, but have simply to lie down. When that experience comes to thee, remember, thou are not shunted. Remember it is *Christ* that

says, "Sit ye here." *Thy* spot in the garden has *also* been consecrated. It has a special name. It is not "the place of wrestling," nor "the place of watching," but "the place of waiting." There are lives that come into this world neither to do great work nor to bear great burdens, but simply to *be; they* are the neuter verbs. They are the flowers of the garden which have had no active mission. They have wreathed no chaplet; they have graced no table; they have escaped the eye of Peter and James and John. But they have gladdened the sight of *Jesus*. By their mere perfume, by their mere beauty, they have brought Him joy; by the very preservation of their loveliness in the valley they have lifted the Master's heart. Thou needst not murmur shouldst thou be one of *these* flowers!

"SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT"

"The Lord is round about His people."
Psalm cxxv. 2.

"THE Lord is round about His people"; that is the same thing as to say "the Lord is the environment of His people;" to "be round about" is just to "environ." Now the environment is a very important thing. There is nothing so sad as to be unsuited to one's environment. When you take a fish out of the water, it dies. Why? Because the water is its environment. When you keep a bird from the open air, it pines. Why? Because the open air is its environment. When you debar man from God, he both pines and dies. Why? Because God is his environment. Man is the only creature in this world that does not know what is good for him—does not know his own environment. The fish darts from the hook that would draw it out of the

water. The bird tries to escape from the snare of the fowler. But man is very easily led away from his water of life, from his native air. He quits the real water for a painted imitation of it, the real air for a bit of coloured space. Therefore he is of all creatures the most miserable. He is not happy even when he has nothing to complain of. It is not enough to have nothing to complain of; I must have something to rejoice in. It is not enough to have no pain; I want pleasure. The lower creatures are not simply unpained; they are joyous; they dart in the water, they sing in the air, they roam in the forest—they revel in the glories of the day. *I* am not like these.

And yet, my soul, thou *mightst* be. Thou, too, hast an environment. Thou art more environed by thy God than the fish is by the water, than the bird is by the air. Thy God is all round about thee. Other creatures have mostly but one element; thy God can be found in all elements. His boundlessness is in the water. His infinitude is in the air, His majesty is in the forest; thou hast of all others the key to the most doors. Wilt thou not take the key, O my soul! Say

not, "I shall be happy in heaven;" thy God is as much *here* as in heaven. Why speakest thou of the limits of earth! What thou needest from earth is not one limit less but one limit more. Wouldst thou be quite happy here and everywhere? Then must thou be limited by thy God, environed by thy God. Thy God must become thine element—the water of thy life, the air of thy freedom, the fire of thine enthusiasm, the land of thy possession. He must beset thee "behind"—in memory, "before"—in prospect, "beside"—in the pressure of the hand. He must be thy vanguard and thy rearguard, thy right and thy left, thy working and thy waiting, thy running and thy rest. Is it not written that, when He breathed on man, man became a living soul. Thou shalt only find thine environment when thou hast caught the breath of God!

"DIVINE HEREDITY"

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me."—Exodus xx. 5, 6.

THE idea is that where there is personal virtue evil need not be transmitted. "Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me" means "showing mercy to thousands of those who would naturally be the victims of heredity." It is no use for a man to say, "I am bound to be a drunkard; my father was a drunkard." Every man is heir to two streams—a heredity of sin and a heredity of grace. But the stream of grace is the older. You may prove to me that my father had a weak will, that my grandfather had a weak will, that my great-grandfather had a weak will. But I have an ancestry farther back than that—an ancestry which connects me with uncon-

querable power; I have come from a Father in heaven. The stream which came to me through impure soil was once a mountain torrent—stainless, impetuous, free, limpid in its purity and sparkling in the sun. Does *this* count for nothing! Is the *corruption* of the stream alone to be propagated! Is there to be no tendency to return to an *earlier* heredity—to the day when my ancestral life leapt among the hills of God! There was no inebriety then, no avarice then, no licentiousness then; the stream was pure from the fountain. Does *this* count for nothing! Is every intermediate hour to have its effect, and the first hour to have none! Are all later impurities to be powerful, and the original purity to be powerless! Is the shell to catch only the dust of the ground, and retain no murmur of the parent sea!

My brother, why sayest thou that the hope in Christ is not the creed of science! Why sayest thou that it is refuted by the law of heredity! Its greatest lever is that law. It is because I believe in heredity that I believe in Jesus. It is because I see Him with qualities not derived from the common soil that I know there must be

a higher Father. And that, my brother, is my hope for *thee*. Thou art bemoaning thine ancestral corruption; thou art lamenting the taint in thy blood. God offers thee a transfusion of new blood—the blood of the Lamb. Hast thou not read "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God"! The streams of the river are the heredity of the river. Wouldst thou have the river of thy life made glad; look up to the streams. Why is thine eye fixed only on its lower reaches where the mud and mire began to gather! The *streams* were limpid, the *streams* were pure, the *streams* were fresh from God. Return to thy source; rise to thy beginnings; mount to the uplands where the fountain fell! Yield to no passion of the hour even though it came from thy fathers; thou hast another Father, a higher Father, an earlier Father. Thy heart and thy flesh may have fainted and failed through ten generations; but the strength of thy heart lies behind all generations, and will conquer in the end. The river may have come from thy fathers; but the fountain of thy life was with God.

"THE PLACE OF HUMAN EFFORT IN RELIGION"

"And the Lord said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."—Exodus xiv. 15.

THERE is a time when the best service of God is not prayer but action. God says to Moses, "Why spend your time in crying for Divine help when there are *human* hands fit for the work; instead of speaking to *Me,* speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." Moses had always been lethargic about action; his natural meekness may have been want of energy. He seems to have expected a purely Divine interference—a bolt from the blue, or an earthquake, or a legion of angels; his vision of the burning bush doubtless to him suggested something drastic. He perhaps even thought it wrong to use physical means. Ought not *God* to have all the glory!

If God willed that the children should recover, there was no use for a doctor. If God was their natural preserver there was no need for vaccination. There was a short road to the land of Canaan—the Divine road; why take the human way! God answered, Because it is the *long* way; because it requires more time and trouble, and therefore more faith and love. And so God answers still to every soul that asks why He has made life so difficult. He says, "It is better to gain than to get; it is better to win than to wear; it is better to conquer your possession than to carry it, unresisting, home."

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast led me towards the land of Canaan by the *long* way. With Thy full presence I could have reached it in an hour; but then, I might have lost it in an hour. I should not have been fitted for it, trained for it, educated for it. I thank Thee that on my pilgrimage Thy face has been veiled to me. If Thy power had been perfectly active I should have had nothing to do. I might have closed the hospitals, the infirmaries, the houses of refuge. And the closing of my care would have been the closing of my love. The invalids

would have been cured at my expense—at the expense of all that is good in me. I should have had no room for pity, no place for solicitude, no corner for care, no margin for human sacrifice. I should have had neither Martha's portion nor Mary's—neither the working nor the waiting. But, O my Father, I bless Thee that Thou hast left me room for both—room to work and room to wait—human power and human patience. I bless Thee that there is silence enough in heaven for my voice to be heard on earth. I bless Thee that the veil of Thy temple has not been wholly rent in twain. If it were, Thy light would dispense with my faith, Thy force would supersede my acting, Thy will would prevent my effort, Thy sacrifice would make useless my love. I will praise Thee for the rim of darkness round Thy sun—that Thou hast sent Israel's children by the lengthened way!

"THE REVELATION OF HEAVEN THAT COMES FROM EARTH"

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."
Luke xvi. 31.

JESUS does not mean that a man would not be persuaded of a future life if a departed soul were to reappear. That would not be true; and Jesus never says what is not true. It would be a direct refutation of His teaching; is not the power of His own resurrection just the fact that it is a message from the dead! But you will get a flood of light on the passage if you ask, What did the rich man in this parable need to be persuaded of? What was he in doubt about during life? The existence of God? The existence of a heaven? The existence of a hell? There is no evidence of any such scepticism. What he did doubt was the eternity of *love*.

He allowed a miserable beggar to lie at his gates uncared for, and to be fed by the accidental crumbs which fell from his table; the *dogs* showed more humanity. When he got into the future life he found that he was unfit for it. It was a life of ministration; and he had never learned to minister. He said, "I am tormented in this place;" he felt deserted, unbefriended, alone. He thought if a dead man were to appear to his five brothers on earth it would help them to be charitable. Jesus says it would not. He says the spirit of love cannot be created from the outside. No opened heavens will give it; no sights of beauty will give it; no scenes of horror will give it; it must exist within.

My soul, why complainest thou of the silence beyond the grave! It is not from beyond the grave that thy revelation of heaven must come. If the essence of heaven were beyond the grave there would be openings in the cloud every day to let thee see through. But the essence of heaven is below, within. Wouldst thou find the river of its life; cry not for the wings of a dove to bear thee upward. Not in the scenes of

mystery shalt thou find that river. Thou shalt only reach it in the commonplace street where Moses and the prophets dwell. While thine eye is on the stars thou art missing thy revelation. Lazarus is lying at thy gate—broken, afflicted, desolate. Israel's children are lying at thy gate—outcasts from the Egypt of civilization, foundlings picked up from the gutters of the Nile. Moses calls thee to save them; the prophets call thee to save them; the burning bush calls thee to save them. Wilt thou hear Moses and the prophets and the burning bush? Then hast thou reached the very essence of heaven—love. Wouldst thou tell thy five brothers that they are immortal? Thou needst not send a message from the tomb. Show them the power of love. Show them the power that here and now can make a man live outside his own environment. Show them the life that can find itself by loss, raise itself by burial, clothe itself by divestiture, enrich itself by poverty, glorify itself by lying in the dust. Then shalt thou ask no more a voice from the grave.

"INSTINCT AND REASON"

"Faith is the evidence of things not seen."
Hebrews xi. 1.

SWALLOWS which have never seen a foreign summer migrate toward that summer. How do they know of its existence? They have no personal memory; their parents have no words by which to tell them; how do they know to travel toward sunny skies of which they have had no experience? In other words, what is their evidence of things unseen? Would you be shocked if I said it was faith. Indeed I can give no better answer. These swallows are moved by an impulse which they cannot explain, which I cannot explain. Perhaps a magnetic influence attracts them in one direction. Perhaps the image of a summer sky is imprinted on the retina. Perhaps they move by a simple feeling of unrest. In any of these cases it is what in

the spiritual world I call faith. It is an impulse beyond present experiences leading the bird to anticipate a *coming* experience. In the case of the swallow the truth of the impulse is proved; it lives to *reach* the summer to which it flies. But suppose it always died before reaching the goal, it would then be like you and me. We also have an impulse to fly beyond our environment. *We* are born in the *winter,* and in the winter we die. Yet we are ever seeking a summer we have never seen—a summer which is not here. Generation after generation pursues its flight to the unknown land of light and warmth. Each drops weary by the way; but its successor resumes the wing. It is faith's wing. No swallows have come back to tell us of the summer sky; but still we fly persistently —through cold, through dark, through storm, through rough blasts of obloquy, through chills of contempt, through hours of weakness and weariness. Is it not a most unreasonable flight?

Yes, my brother, there is no reason *in* it; it is higher than reason—it is instinct. In all prophetic things, trust thy *faith* before thy

reason. Reason is *against* the migration of the swallows; reason is against the labours of the bee; it would be easy to demonstrate, from reason, that both were in a delusion. Yet the swallow has proved right; the bee has proved right—right by instinct. Thou, too, hast an instinct, my brother; it is called faith. Reason has taken many of thine instincts away. But she has left thee this *one*—the prophetic power of the swallow, the prophetic power of the bee. To thee, as to the swallow, God has given an impulse of unrest—a necessity to migrate towards skies thou hast not seen. To thee, as to the bee, God has given the impulse to seek a tabernacle of which thou hast no experience—the dwelling-place of the Most High. I hear men speak of songs of the season. Thou hast a song *before* the season—a song which is in vogue among the angels. There bloom in thy *heart* flowers that are not yet in thy *ground*. The bird of the air sees the storm before it comes and flies *from* it; thou seest the calm before it comes, and fliest *to* it. Faith is *thine* evidence of things not seen.

"LAZARUS BOUND"

"And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."—John xi. 44.

A MAN'S resurrection does not accomplish everything. Lazarus had received the new life, but he retained the relics of the old corruption; he rose from the dead bound with the graveclothes. The command, "Lazarus, come forth!" had to be followed by another mandate, "Loose him, and let him go!" It is ever so. When we are lifted into the life of Christ we present at first a most incongruous spectacle. We are like Nebuchadnezzar's image —one part gold, the other clay. We profess to be risen from the dead, and yet we show traces of the sepulchre. Old habits linger; old weaknesses remain. So far as clothing is concerned, there is at first no difference between

the risen Lazarus and the dead Lazarus; the difference is all within. But that is an enormous difference. You and I may meet on one landing of a stair. Outwardly we are on the same level—one height above the ground. But our intentions are opposite; I am coming down the stair; you are going up. Mine is a movement toward the earth; yours is a resurrection movement. So was it with Lazarus. He was on a level with the past in point of apparel. Measuring by the eye you might have said, "Judas seems as good as he." But Judas was putting *on* his graveclothes; Lazarus was about to take his *off;* the one was coming down, the other was going up, the stair.

My brother, do not measure thyself by thy garments! Thy garments may be of earth long after thy life has come from heaven. Be not dismayed that when thou hast crossed the Red Sea, when thou hast heard the sound of the timbrel, when thou hast listened to the triumph of Miriam's song, thou hast not left Egypt all behind! Be not dismayed that beyond the sea there lies, not the immediate Canaan, but the dry, parched land of the desert! Be not dis-

mayed that on thy walk to the New Jerusalem thou art met by the unhealed lepers of thy heart! Though old tempers rise, though old jealousies crop up, though old pride reappear, though moments of old doubt return, say not that thy faith is vain! Knowest thou not that the enemy lingers in the suburbs after the city is taken! Is it not written, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" Thy light is the last thing to be given; it is to follow thy waking, to follow thy rising. When thou risest from the grave, hand and foot and eye are still bound; thou canst not run, thou canst not work, thou canst not see. God's first gift to thee is the power to *feel,* yea, to feel pain; thy new like thine old birth is but a child's cry. But the cry is the cry of enlargement; the pain is the pain of convalescence. Yesterday, the graveclothes were no barrier to thee; to-day, they are; therefore, to-morrow thou shalt hear the mandate, "Loose him, and let him go!"

"SELF-SURRENDER"

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."—John xv. 4.

NO individual becomes great by his own individuality; he only reaches greatness through the life of another. Why is the patriot distinguished? Because he abides in a larger life—the life of his country. Why is the philanthropist distinguished? Because he is a member of a larger body—the body of humanity. Why is the poet distinguished? Because he is part of a larger spirit—the spirit of nature. The truth is, every one of us only *begins to live* by the act of *dying*. The branch bears fruit because it loses itself in the tree. An individual man is glorious in proportion as he feels himself to be another. If a branch were conscious it would not say "I am a branch," but "I am a tree." If a subject of the Czar

said to a subject of King Edward, "Russia would beat England in war," the latter would feel sore. Why? Because he has identified his own life with the life of England; her triumph is his triumph, her defeat is his defeat; the branch claims to be the tree. So is it with the Christian. He makes Christ a personal matter—rejoices when He is honoured, weeps when He is defamed. I saw a German professor crying like a child over prevailing infidelity. The world would have wondered; it would have said "Nobody is hurting *him!*" *He* would not have admitted that; the branch felt itself to be the tree.

My soul, hast thou realised the secret of thy greatness? It is not thine independence; it is thy surrender to another—to Christ—to universal Man. It is not even self-denial that will make thee great; what thou needest is not more *privation* but larger *enjoyment*. I hear thee speak of the forgetfulness of self. Yes, my soul; but the solemn question is, the *manner* of thy forgetting. How wouldst thou forget; shall it be by death or shall it be by life? Thou canst forget thyself by chloroform; but *that* is

not greatness; it is the unconsciousness purchased by *dying*. But I know of an unconsciousness which is purchased by living—living in the life of another; it is the thing called love. The branch could forget itself by being withered; it prefers to forget itself by being in the vine. Get into the vine, my soul! Get into the life of another—*the* other! Feel thyself a member of *His* body! Identify thy interests with the interests of *Him!* Let there beat one pulse between thee and thy Lord! Let His grief be thy grief; let His joy be thy joy! Let thy prayer be the Lord's Prayer, His six golden wishes thy six golden desires in life! Let Him and thee join in prayer together—for the hallowed Name, for the coming Kingdom, for the accepted Will, for the nourishment of life, for the reign of mercy, for the end of sin! Thou shalt reach the sleep of God's beloved when thy forgetfulness of self shall be the remembrance of Jesus.

"THE PAIN THAT IS DIVINE"

"Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."—John xv. 2.

MAN commonly inflicts suffering upon *unpromising* objects; the greatest criminal gets the heaviest sentence. But the penalties which *God* inflicts are upon the lives of promise, and because their promise gives hope of amendment. Two boys are brought before you, both convicted of lying. The one has been false all his life; the other has never lied before. You will probably decide to punish the first more severely. God's decision is the opposite. Instead of two boys, the passage takes its illustration from two branches. The one bears nothing; the other bears less than it ought to do. You would think the former would be treated more drastically. No, it is the latter. The former is simply removed from contact; the latter is subjected to severe

discipline. Why? Because the penalties of God are proportionate not to the sin but to the promise. And, in pursuance of this law, our moral *pain* is proportionate not to the sin but to the promise. Paul suffers more inward pain than Nero—because he has more goodness in him. I never read of *Nero* beating on his breast and crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death!" He had not love enough; he had not faith enough; he had not light enough. The pain of Paul came from the life *higher* than his own—the life of the tree.

No more, then, my brother, canst thou say with the men of old time, "He is afflicted; therefore he must be bad." Thou wouldst be nearer the truth by the opposite sentence, "He is afflicted; therefore he must be good." In the moral world it is in fine weather that the glass falls. Be not discouraged that the glass falls; in the sphere of the heart it means not rain but sunshine. Be not dismayed although with each peak thou climbest the mist seems to deepen. Abraham never saw the mist till he began to ascend Mount Moriah. He saw it not in Egypt

—where his life was really bad; only in the hour of his obedience did there come to him the call to sacrifice. Dost thou ask why Abraham was afflicted on the mount and Lot left scathless on the plain? Because Abraham *was* on the mount and Lot *was* on the plain. It is whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth; it is *His light* that makes *thy shadow*. Tremble not at the shadow, fear not when thou enterest into the cloud. It is only in thy transfiguration moments that God *prepares* a cloud for thee. It is only on the summit of Moriah that He bids thee yield thine offering. It is only on thy road to Canaan that He shows thee a path through the desert. The Father gives hard lessons to His *promising* son.

"THE BURDEN IN HEAVEN"

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. v. 4.

"NOT for that we would be unclothed." I understand Paul to mean "not that we would be unclothed of our *burdens* in the future world." And this is a very strange saying. Paul is comparing earth with heaven. He says, "In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened." We expect him to add, "when we get to heaven we shall make up for it by a life of ease." On the contrary, he says the advantage of heaven will be that we shall be able to *bear* our burdens, "mortality shall be swallowed up of life." The burden which is a hindrance here will cease to be a hindrance there. Why does not Paul rather want to get rid of it altogether—to be unclothed of it? Be-

cause he sees a use for it *yonder*. I remember when I was minister of Innellan attending the last hours of a little deformed girl. She had been a lifelong invalid. She had borne years of pain with the most extraordinary patience. I asked her, in wonder, how she could bear so bravely. I expected her to answer, "I weep now; I shall laugh yet"—"I go on foot now; I shall have a carriage yet"—"I have poor raiment now; I shall wear diamonds yet." Instead of that, she said, "O sir! you know I am training to be a ministering spirit." That little girl had seen the bridal of the earth and sky—the marriage supper of the Lamb

For indeed, my soul, what thou needest is *not* an unclothing of thy burden; it is that thy burden should be swallowed up in the life of love. Why has thy Father given thee a burden here? To make thee long for the beauty of heaven? A burden is a bad preparation for beauty. If Heaven is exclusively a place of flowers, thou shouldst be in the garden *now*. Why art thou *not* now in the garden? It is because thou art not *training* for a garden. Thou art training to be a ministering spirit.

That is why God does not unclothe thee of thy heavy garments. The heavy garments are the fashion up yonder—only, they no longer oppress. God would not diminish thy load; He would strengthen thine arm. There will be more weights to carry in heaven than on earth. Wouldst thou enter into the joy of thy Lord? The joy of thy Lord is burden-bearing. He began by feeling the heaviness of the vesture; but love made it a garment of praise; and now His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Thou shalt not need to be divested of thy care when thou shalt enter into the joy, into the sympathy, of Jesus.

"THE VALUE OF EASTER DAY"

"An angel rolled away the stone, and sat upon it."
Matt. xxviii. 2.

SURELY the angel of Easter morning did a *superfluous* piece of work! To roll away the stone of the sepulchre was a very important thing; but to sit upon it afterward—surely that was a useless task! Is it not a lame and impotent conclusion to a great deed! We should have expected the Easter angel, after rolling away the stone, to have been described as winging his way "beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb." But, when we are called to see him sitting on the old gravestone, is *that* poetry, is that beauty? Yes—the grandest poetry, the most subtle beauty. It is a far finer image than would have been depicted in the angel flying home. It is not enough that the stone of my grief should be rolled away; it must be glorified. Many a sorrow, when it passes

away, leaves soreness behind. It is no longer the place of my tribulation *to-day,* but it was the place of my tribulation yesterday. I *weep over* my yesterday; I need something to *explain* my yesterday. To-day has been glorified; I want yesterday to be glorified too. I want to see the angel in the place where my old sorrow lay—on the stone of my former sepulchre. The glory of Easter morning is that it brightens *past* mornings. It tells me that what I called death was never there. It throws a light upon the ancient graves. It answers the long-repeated question, "To what purpose is this waste?" It dispels my complaining over the vanished years. It dries my tears shed for the shortness of human life. It vindicates the past justice of my Father.

Lord of Easter Day, let me see the angel on the gravestone! I cannot see Thy *rising;* I am born too late for that. But on every gravestone Thou hast left an angel sitting; the stone has itself become radiant. I used to cry for a chariot of fire to bear me beyond death. The chariot comes not, but the angel at the grave is better; he makes the cloud of death itself Thy

chariot. Reveal to me that angel at the grave! Give me a view of death as a *hallowed* thing! It has long been to me the king of terrors; my gravestone has held a spectre. Take away the spectre, and put an *angel* there! If I saw an angel on the stone, I do not think I should need to see it *rolled away*. When I was a child I would have abolished the thunder; I thought it was the voice of *disorder* in the world. I would not abolish it now; I know it is the rhythm of Thine *own* voice. What has made the change? It is the presence of the angel. The thunder has not been rolled away, but it has ceased to be to me a discord; it has become a chord of Thy music. So is it with death this Easter morning! An angel sits upon the former spot of gloom! Thou hast glorified my pain of yesterday! Thou hast exalted my valley of humiliation! Thou hast peopled my desert of silence! Thou hast lighted my path of despair! Thou hast put the myrtle where the briar grew, the fir tree where the thorn grew! The stone of the sepulchre is not less heavy; but the weight of affliction has become a weight of glory.

"THE PEACEABLENESS AFTER PURITY"

"First pure, then peaceable."—James iii. 17.

THERE is a peaceableness which comes *before* purity; and it is *not* beautiful. It is the gentleness of a shallow nature. There is all the difference in the world between the peace of an inland lake and the peace of the great sea. The one is calm because it is sheltered from the storm, the other because it has lulled the breeze to rest upon its bosom. Even so is it with the passions of the heart. There are lives among us which are only inland lakes. They roll not, they toss not; and yet we do not deem them beautiful. We feel that their peace has cost them no struggle; they are calm because they cannot help it. I do not prize the forgiveness of my sin by souls like these; they have not love enough to be angry. But there are other lives which are like the

great sea. Theirs is not the peace of passionlessness, but of passion—of that purity called love. When I do wrong, they forgive me for *Christ's sake*—not because they are *indifferent* to Christ. They pardon me, not because they are ignorant of the *flood,* but because they see the rainbow. The shallow heart can pardon because it regrets not my yesterday; the pure heart can pardon because it sees my tomorrow.

Grant me, O Christ, the peacemaking that comes from purity! I would not learn forgiveness by ceasing to feel my brother's *sin;* I would learn it by coming to know my brother's *possibilities.* I would not that his night should become less dark to me; but I should like to have a clearer view of his *morning.* I feel that the pure in heart, just because they see God, have a great advantage for pardoning; they have the vision of all eternity with its boundless possibilities. Give me that vision, O Lord—what the pure in heart see! Give me a sight of the many hopes that bloom in the many mansions of my Father! Give me a view of the hidden springs of mercy that are flowing underground in the paradise fields! When I am

tempted to send the flood, let me see my brother's bow of promise! Let me see the flower as it will bloom in *Thy* garden; let me hear the music as it will sound on *Thy* harp! Let me figure my offending brother in the light of kindlier skies! Let me figure him without the graveclothes—without the impediments of time! Let me figure him in a new environment —with the old heredity expelled and the old upbringing supplanted! Let me figure him born again—of a new life, of a purer blood. Let me figure him brought up in fresh surroundings —in the presence of *Thy* glory! Then shall my forgiveness be the fruit of fervour, not of coldness. I shall reach the blessing of the merciful when I have received the vision of the pure in heart.

"THE UNION OF SANCTITY AND LIBERTY"

"By me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture."—John x. 9.

"He shall go no more out."—Rev. iii. 12.

WHICH of these two statements is correct? They are made by the same man; and yet they seem contradictory. The one says that when a man comes to Christ he shall come out again into the world whenever he likes; the other says that when he once goes in he shall never come out at all. What does John mean? Has he changed his mind about the relation of Christ to the world? No, he is in perfect harmony with himself. What he means is that when a Christian comes out into the world he will cease any longer to regard the world as *outside;* he will count it a bit of the temple. He will find pasture in the places where he used to find

waste. He never found pasture in the world before he came to Jesus; he thought it a scene of mental starvation. But when he comes to Jesus the world will take a new colour; it will catch the *glow* of Jesus. We often see a Christian coming out from the temple door and joining the merry secular throng. We say, "I told you the revival would not last; that man has cooled down; he has gone back to the world." No, he has not; he has extended his Christian premises. To the eye of the *spectator* he is coming out—but not to his *own* eye. The world is to him a mansion of the *Father's house*—one of the many mansions. It is a room within the temple. It is a place of worship. It is an altar of sacrifice. It is a scene of prayer. It is a school for humility. It is a spot for revelation. It is a possible meeting-place with God.

My soul, thinkest thou that the only cross of Christ is that of the desert! Thinkest thou that there is no altar of sacrifice in the *world!* There *is* such an altar—and it burns most in the hour of social gaiety. I hear thee speak of the sacrifice involved in worldly *griefs;* hast thou pon-

dered the sacrifice in worldly *joys!* Hast thou considered the hour of festivity! When thou art sitting at the festive board and listening to the ringing laughter, hast thou meditated how many of these men are covering a cross! Why do they cover it? To prevent the sight of their pain from spoiling the evening's joy. All such are bearing the *true* cross—Christ's cross. They are hiding the thorn in the rose. They are burying the sigh in the song. They are shrouding the tear in the smile. They are concealing the weight at their heart by the lightness of their own movement. Abraham has risen up from before his dead to perform the courtesies of the householder; he has anointed his face and washed his hands that he may not break his brother's joy. He still keeps his cross, but he keeps it under a wreath of flowers. Truly the service of this earthly table is a service in the courts of the Lord!

"THE DECLINE OF RECKLESS COURAGE."

"Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause."—Psalm xxv. 3.

THERE is nothing which men are by nature so proud of as reckless courage —transgressing without cause. They are not proud of having transgressed through ignorance. They are not proud of having transgressed through false conviction. But they are apt to be proud of a wrong deed whose simple motive was personal *fearlessness;* it seems to make them heroes. The Psalmist, on the contrary, says it is a thing to be ashamed of; he will admit nothing heroic in a deed of reckless courage. And, indeed, I think he is right. For there are two kinds of courage in this world—the courage of the flesh and the courage of the spirit. The one is something which we share with the beast of the field, and in which

the beast of the field excels us; the other is all our own. I remember reading lately of two little girls discussing the depth of a pond. One had the courage of the flesh and was eager to display it; she proposed they should both jump in and try. Her sister drew back; *she* was *timid* in the flesh. The bolder of the two leapt into the water and did not come up; she had been caught in a bank of weeds. Then the one timid in the flesh became brave in the spirit; without a moment's hesitation she sprang into the dreaded water and rescued her sister. Which of these had most animal courage? The one who endangered her life without cause. The other never *reached* the absence of fear—not even when she saved her sister. Yet hers was a nobler courage, less in quantity, higher in kind. She never lost the timidity of the flesh; but she was carried *through* that timidity by a motive of love.

O Lord Jesus Christ, dispel my false ideal of glory! Dispel my thought that to say "I do not care" is a manly thing! Teach me that the glory of man is not fearlessness, but fear! The higher I climb in creation, the more does my

flesh lose courage. The lion is bolder than the child; the child is bolder than the youth; the youth is bolder than the man. I have more fear as I come nearer to *Thee*. Men before Thy coming did not fear death as they fear it now. Thou hast made life so responsible that death is to me more appalling; I could not bear it now without the vision of a debt discharged. It is easy for a man to die who thinks himself a worm—who deems his brothers worms; such a life to such a brotherhood can have nothing to pay. But I have learned from Thee the *magnitude* of life, the awfulness of life. I have learned from Thee the weight of an idle word, the sweep of a single sin. I have learned it, and it makes me laden. I have lost the courage of the beast of the field; it has dropped from me like Elijah's mantle as I have ascended. There has come to me a great fear—Thy fear—the fear of the Lord. I thank Thee, O Christ, for this new, this solemn gift.

"UNREALITY"

"The fashion of this world passeth away."
1 Cor. vii. 31.

THE word translated "fashion" literally means "stage scenery." Paul does not mean that everything on earth is perishable, but that every *unreal* thing is perishable. Stage scenery is unreal scenery. It does not represent the actual facts of the greenroom. Many an actor is bringing down the house with laughter when his own heart is breaking. Paul saw that a great deal of life is simply stage acting—concealment of the greenroom. How many kind things are spoken, not in order to reveal, but in order to cover! How many gifts are sent, not for *your* sake, but for the sake of the donor! How many blandishments are lavished for a vote! How many visits are paid for a subscription! Paul says all this unreality will pass away. When

will it pass away? At death, you say. No; *death* does not reveal the reality of life. *Death* does not tear away the mask from the face of my brother. Death is itself a mask, itself an unreality. So far from causing the stage scenery to vanish, it is itself the climax of illusion. It is not to death I look; it is to love. *Love* is the great dispeller of unreality. Love is the great emancipator from stage scenery. Love is the true rending of the veil between this world and the world to come.

My soul, I have heard thee speak of life as a vain show. It is rather the *want* of life that is a vain show. It is thy life's unreality that makes it vanity. I have heard thee speak of death as the revealer of delusions; it is itself the biggest delusion of all. It is the *deadening* effect of the worldly fashion that makes that fashion unreal to thee. It paralyses energy; it curbs spontaneity. Not by drawing near the grave shalt thou learn life's reality. Thou shalt learn it by leaving the grave further behind. Why sayest thou that all things are levelled in the tomb! They are not; there is stage scenery even in the funeral pageant. *Love* is the only

leveller; fly to the bosom of love! In vain shalt thou wander in the cemetery; in vain shalt thou count the tombstones; in vain shalt thou read the inscriptions on the graves—they will teach thee nothing of life's reality. But love will. Love will rend the drapery and let thee see through. Love will tear the mask and show thee the man. Love will break the illusion that lights the stage of time. Love will detect the false ring of the pretending gold. Love will see the true gem in many an *un*pretentious casket. Love will discover the greenroom where hides the real life of the actor. Fly to the bosom of love, O my soul!

"THE MEETING OF LIFE'S EXTREMES."

"Except ye become as little children."
Matt. xviii. 3.
"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
—Ephesians iii. 19.

TO become a little child; to be filled with all the fulness of God—how shall we reconcile these two aspirations! They need no reconciling. Do you want to get back the qualities of your childhood? You can only do so by going forward. There are only two things which can give the qualities of the child—emptiness and fulness—the opening, and the completed, day. Take the Sermon on the Mount—the blessing which Jesus pronounced on certain qualities. They are all qualities of the child—humility, dissatisfaction, meekness, hunger, mercy, purity, peacemaking; and the child has them by reason of its emptiness. But

the man can get them back by his fulness. The child is "poor in spirit" because he has no ideal; the man, because his ideal is so *high*. The child often "mourns" because he is too small for his environment; the man because he is too *big* for his environment. The child is "meek" because he is shallow; the man, because he is balancing the *depths*. The child "hungers" before he takes food; the hunger of the spiritual man comes *after* tasting. The child "forgives" because he forgets; the man, because he remembers—remembers the frailty of his brother's frame. The child is "pure" because he is innocent; the man, because he sees impurity's stain. The child "makes peace" because he is ignorant of self-interest; the man, because he has learned self-sacrifice. The spiritual man gets back the virtues of the child; but he gets them back "on the Mount."

My brother, often have I heard thee lament the loss of thy youth. Ever art thou deploring that the hours of the morning pass so soon away, that the afternoon and evening come so quickly round. What if the afternoon and evening should be the road *back* to the morning!

What if the fulness of experience should restore the very glory which was to thee associated with ignorance of the world! It *can* restore it; it will restore it. Thy youth is coming back to thee by the very chariot in which it departed. It departed with *opening* experience; it will return with completed experience. The star that waits for thee is "the bright and morning star." Behind the afternoon clouds, behind the evening shadows, behind the night watches, lies thy prospect of a second dawn. Is it not written "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son"—the Child-Christ! So shall it be in the fulness of *thine* experience. *Thy* Child-Christ shall come. Life will dawn anew. Morn will break once more. Thou shalt stand again in the east with the rising sun. Thou shalt hear again the shepherds' song over the plains of Bethlehem. And the song shall be all hope—the hope that comes only with the morning, the optimism of first bells, the expectation that is inseparable from the dawn—"Glory! peace! goodwill!"

"SALVATION AND DILAPIDATION"

"To enter into life halt or maimed."
Matt. xviii. 8.

THERE are two ways of entering into the life of God—the mounting up with the wings of an eagle and the halting on lame feet. The prodigal son came in by the former way; he entered at once into rest; he was greeted instantaneously with the music and dancing of the Father's house. The patriarch Jacob came in by the other way; he halted on his thigh amid the glories of Peniel; the breaking of the day came to *him* in the shrinking of the sinew. I am glad there is this latter way of entering into life. I am glad one can enter into the life of God when he has *not* the wings of an eagle—when he feels the reverse of soaring. I am glad that depression is not incompatible with the new birth—that a man may be halt, maimed, mutilated, and yet at that very

time may have already passed from death unto life. None but Christ ever offered such liberal terms of salvation. None but Christ would ever accept a bird with broken wing. The men of the past demanded the flight of the eagle. They wrote upon the portals of their heaven, "The halt and the maimed enter not here." Greece demanded the beautiful; Rome called for the strong; Judea summoned the good; none said to the labouring and heavy-laden "I go to prepare a place for you." None but one—the Man, Christ Jesus. He alone invited the lame feet. The Greek could only come in the car of Venus; the Jew could only ascend in the chariot of Elijah; the Christian could *totter* into the Kingdom of God.

O Love Divine, all loves excelling! we thank Thee for Thy transcendence. All earth-born love is built upon some glory of its object; my carnal heart waits for the appearing of my brother's star. But *Thou* waitest not for the star; Thou hast songs in the night. Thy heart is less exacting than mine; it claims less at the starting. *I* demand at the very least the presence of a bow in the cloud; *Thou* wilt

accept the cloud *without* the bow. *I* refuse to be reconciled to my brother unless he has offered me his gift; but *Thou* bringest Thy gift to *invite* my reconciliation. Thou comest to me in my impotence, in my poverty, in my mean attire. Thou comest to me when it is still midnight. Thou comest when there is only a manger with no Christ in it; Thou *bringest* Thy Christ to the manger. Thou comest when there is only the storm and no Jesus; Thou *bringest* Jesus to *walk* upon the storm. Thou alone hast seen the prodigal afar off. Other masters have delayed their coming till he has put on the ring and the robe; Thou *bringest* the ring and the robe to the house of his squalour. Man's heart can rise to the hills of heaven; but Thine alone can embrace the valleys of earth.

"THANKSGIVING FOR THE BLESSED DEAD"

"Jesus said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me."—John xi. 41.

WERE you ever struck by a peculiarity in the passage above quoted? Jesus thanks His Father for a boon which has not yet been given! He blesses God for a resurrection which has not yet been effected! "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me." How could Jesus say that! Lazarus was still in the grave! The trappings of death were yet around him! The silence of the sepulchre was unbroken! The prayer had gone up; but there had been no audible response. Why should the thanksgiving have preceded the harvest? Because the act of Jesus has a foundation in experience. Do you and I never say, in our letters to a friend, "Thanking you in anticipation"! *When* do we use these words? It is when we

feel sure that the thing will be agreeable to the friend's will. Jesus, too, was sure of this. He was quite sure that the thing He asked was agreeable to the will of the Father; therefore He thanked the Father in anticipation. He did not *always* feel this certainty; in Gethsemane He said, "Father, if it be *possible.*" But here He had no doubt at all. What *was* this point on which He felt so sure of the Father's concurrence? It was the immortality of the soul. He knew that His Father shrank from the *dying* of a man. He knew that His Father was praying, as *He* was praying, for the soul's eternal life. He knew that the heart of His Father was ever adverse to the claims of the grave. He was so sure of His Father's mind that He thanked Him in advance.

I, too, will thank Thee for my hallowed dead, O God! I will thank Thee in the absence of outward evidence—in the midst of the great silence! There has as yet come no resurrection mandate to my ear. I have heard no voice which said "Lazarus, come forth!" I have seen with the eye of sense nothing to tell me that the garments of the grave are a delusion.

Yet the attitude of my soul will be one rather of thanksgiving than of prayer. Somehow, I feel as if this were one of the things I did not *need* to pray for, one of the things which are granted already, one of the things in which thanksgiving takes the *place* of prayer. When I stand beside the grave that professes to hold my dead, I seem to understand the words, "In that day ye shall ask me *nothing*." There are some things for which it would be superfluous to pray. Could I pray that Thou shouldst love the Lord Jesus! Could I pray that Thou shouldst keep Thy Divine purity! Such requests I have no *need* to make. Neither need I ask the immortality of human love. It is a part of Thyself; Thou *couldst* not let it die. Therefore, I will not pray for my dead; I will give *thanks* for them. I will bring a wreath to the sepulchre—a wreath of immortelles. I will sing an Easter hymn in the *winter* of the year. I will number the departed among the members of my household; I will say, with the little girl by the gravestone, "We are seven!" I will keep a place for the old chair in a corner of my heart. I will garner the old songs in the

fields of memory. I will preserve the birthdays on the fly-leaf of the old Bible as anniversaries, not of the dead, but of the living. And when, within Thy house, I bend my knee in the moment allotted to silent prayer, I will not say "Father, raise up my dead!" but "Father, I bless Thy Name, that my dead are raised already!"

"PAUL'S HYMN TO LOVE"

"Love endureth all things."—1 Cor. xiii. 7.

THERE is one thing which has often struck me in Paul's hymn to love; it is a hymn in praise of what love *forbears* to do. Take it verse by verse, clause by clause, and you will find this true. It opens with the strain, "Love suffers long;" it closes with the chord, "Love abideth." To "abide" is really the same thing as to "suffer long;" we say, "I cannot *abide* this"—cannot bear it. In its beginning, in its ending, in its intermediate stages, the hymn rings the changes on one note, "Love endureth." Should we not have expected less prosaic ground? Should we not have looked for the harp to tell, not what love can bear, but what love can do? Why not speak of her gifts bestowed, of her treasures lavished, of her wealth diffused? Why not sing of the ointment she has outpoured, of the feet she

has washed with her tears, of the spices she has brought to the sepulchre? Why not tell of her journeyings, of her bounties, of her charities, of her deeds of glory done? Would not this have made a grander hymn than the mere recital of how much she can bear without crying?

Nay, my soul, it is not so; Paul is right, and thou art wrong. The glory of all things lies in their *arduous* path. The arduous path of love is its forbearance. Art thou seeking a romantic outlet for thy love? Art thou looking for a chance to plunge into the river, or to face the devouring flame? Art thou saying, either to thy Christ or to thy brother, "Bid me that I come to Thee on the waters"? I would dissuade thee from such a prayer. It is not the *height* of the aim that makes me dissuade thee. I do not think the aim high enough, the test sure enough. It is easy for thy love to expand itself in an ecstatic spasm. It is easy for "the passion-flower at the gate" to let fall "a splendid tear" —to be sacrificial in heroic circumstances. But the test of thy love is where the circumstances are *not* heroic. The test of thy love is where

there is no splendour in the tear—where it falls in secret and unseen. Can thy love bear life's little frictions? Can it bear the frettings by the world's prose? Can it bear to be itself misunderstood, misinterpreted? Can it endure a delay in the response; can it support those moments of silence where there is no return? Can it take ashes in exchange for beauty, the spirit of heaviness in response to the garment of praise? The poet tells us of a rose in a garden where there was no other rose "to reflect its blushes." That garden must have been Gethsemane. If thy love can bear *that* and not die, it is *worthy* of Paul's hymn.

"SERVICE BY THE SORROWFUL"

"Let us run with patience."—Hebrews xii. 1.

TO *run* with patience is a very difficult thing. Running is apt to suggest the *absence* of patience, the eagerness to reach the goal. We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. And, indeed, for those who *are* invalids patience is the angel-virtue, the crown of spiritual ripeness. Yet, I do not think the invalid's patience the hardest to achieve. There is a patience which I believe to be harder—the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength. But I know of something that implies a strength greater still; it is the power to *work* under the stroke. To have a great weight at your heart and still to run, to have a big grief in your soul and still to work,

to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still to perform the daily task—it is a Christ-like thing! Many of us could nurse our grief without crying if we were *allowed* to nurse it. The hard thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in bed, but in the street. We are called to bury our sorrow, not in lethargic quiescence, but in active service—in the exchange, in the counting-house, in the workshop, in the hour of social intercourse, in the contribution to another's joy. There is no burial of sorrow so difficult as that; it is the "*running* with patience."

This was *Thy* patience, O Son of Man! It was at once a waiting and a running—a waiting for the goal, and a doing of the lesser work meantime. How seldom, when, in that Gospel story, I see Thee bearing my little crosses, do I think that, all the time, a big cross was at Thine own heart! I see Thee at Cana turning the water into wine lest a marriage feast should be clouded. I see Thee in the desert feeding a multitude with bread just to relieve a temporary pain. And, all the time, Thou wert bearing a mighty grief, unshared, unspoken. Thou

wert carrying *my* cross up *Thy* Dolorous Way, and easing my heart when Thine own heart was breaking. Make me partaker of Thy marvellous patience! Give me the power, Thy power, to run the race when the heart is heavy! I often ask to get light at evening time. But I should like to *give* light at evening time, O Lord. I should like at my evening time to have so much of Thy Divine patience that I could run the common race of life and make no sign. I should like to have a smile for the weary though my own soul be sad, to have a cheer for the downcast though my own spirit be drooping. Men ask for a rainbow in the cloud; but I would ask *more* from Thee. I would be, in my cloud, myself a rainbow—a minister to others' joy. My patience will be perfect when it can *work* in the vineyard.

"THE JOYOUSNESS OF PIETY"

"As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath."
2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.

IS religion, then, so unfavourable to cheerfulness? Are the Sabbaths of the Lord such miserable days that we can only keep them when we are desolate? The idea is exactly the reverse; it is that we come to value God's happy Sabbaths when we ourselves are miserable. The desolateness comes not from God, but from the world. The desolateness is not the *preparation* for the Sabbath; it is the contrast to the Sabbath. Men flee to the Sabbath to *avoid* the desolation. We sometimes say, "As long as the rain fell they kept under shelter." The rain is not the preparation for the shelter; it is the contrast to it; the shelter supplies a want which the rain creates. The worship of God does not propose to make me miserable; it proposes to cure my misery. Men

have spoken of religion as a state of asceticism, of individual loneliness. It is entirely the opposite; the *world* is a state of individual loneliness; we fly to God that our solitude may be broken. The burden of this world is its isolation of human souls; men are not properly united. There is a desolateness in purely secular life. We are not social enough, not comrades enough. There is as big a gulf between each of us as between Dives and Lazarus. There are times when we realise this, and then we cry aloud—cry aloud for the communion of Christ, for the voices of the great multitude, for the noise of many waters, for the breaking of solitude by the general assembly of the first-born. And the prayer we breathe is the prayer for a larger world.

Lord, take us out of the desert—out of the desolate places! We are too much alone here. It is not the *happiness* of earth that makes it unfit for us; it is its *un*happiness. This world is not our *rest*—not our Sabbath. It fails to be our rest because it is not sufficiently a *world*. It is too lonely, too devoid of human cheer. We want more gaiety, more company, more inter-

change of thought, more genuine social joy. That is why we come to *Thy* world, O Christ. It is because in Thy Father's house we hear the sound of music and the tread of dancing. It is because in Thy hall of banqueting we see a table spread for guests innumerable. It is because, from within Thy courts, we catch the strains of melody—the songs of voices redeemed from selfishness. It is because in the streets of the New Jerusalem "the boys and girls play." It is because the very hired servants of Thy Father have bread and to spare. Train us for Thy joy! Prepare us for Thy feast! Ripen us for Thy year of jubilee! Let us feel our want on earth that we may protest; let us learn our famine that we may clamour; let us experience our chain that we may struggle to be free! It will be worth while to be led into the desert of Sinai if in the stillness of its lonely hours we shall hear the Sabbath bells of Canaan.

"THE SUMMER OF THE SOUL"

"Thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin."
Job v. 24.

THE climax of moral goodness is goodness in the domestic circle. When the beauty of a man's character reaches to his own dwelling, it must be beautiful indeed; the acme of virtue is to visit one's habitation and not sin. The common view is the opposite. We think of the home circle as the *beginning* of goodness. We think of the intercourse between brother and sister as an incipient stage, a preparatory stage. We look upon the domestic altar as the place of *trivial* sacrifice, the school for *beginners* in the Christian race! But here is a startling revelation! Here is a voice from the ancient past which speaks a paradox! It tells us that the home is not the beginning, but the climax, of perfectness. It tells us that moral loveliness is

never so lovely in a man as when it shines in his dwelling-place. It tells us that the flower of human life only reaches its full bloom when its fragrance fills the garden where it was *first* planted.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes —the *order* of Thy statutes! I am in a great mistake about that order; I put Thy richest treasures on the lowest step. I have been accustomed to say, "Be faithful in little things, and you will learn to be faithful in much." But *Thy* order *inverts* the sequence; it says, "Be faithful in great things, and you will learn to be faithful in small." I have been greatly mistaken about that child which was put into the midst of Thy disciples; I have misread the *motive* for the deed. I have thought it was meant to teach me a lesson of humility. I suffered the child to come because I thought I was humbling my pride. It never occurred to me till now that I was getting a model for my highest imitation. It never dawned on me till now that the duties of home were set before me because the duties of home were the highest. But I begin to see it all! I begin

to see that there is no sinlessness so hard to win as sinlessness "in the habitation." Often have I lost in the household that temper which I *controlled* amid the crowd; often have I yielded in the home to that temptation which I *resisted* in the world. It is easy to lay aside my weight before the cloud of witnesses; but when the witnesses are gone, the weight presses. Therefore I know why Thou hast made the *child* my model—the child amid the duties of home. Not Peter in the storm, not Matthew at the receipt of custom, not Jairus in the hour of grief, hast Thou made my model. The storm incites to heroism; the receipt of custom keeps me sober; the hour of grief withers earthly vanity. But the home is the unheroic hour, the unguarded hour, the hour when I am most *apt* to be vain. If Thy Spirit can reign *there,* it can reign everywhere; I shall walk stainless through the universe when I can visit my habitation and not sin.

"PRAYER FOR CHRIST'S SAKE"

"Prayer shall be made for Him continually."
Psalm lxii. 15.

PRAYER for Him! Prayer for the Divine Being—the Messiah! Prayer for the welfare of Christ! The words are startling, the sentiment more startling still. I have been accustomed to pray for those in need—for the poor, the squalid, the vicious. But to pray for God, to supplicate in behalf of a being who is exalted above all other beings—is not that a profane thing! No, my brother; it is very holy, very pious—the most pious of all prayers. When you say that your Christ is exalted above all other beings did it never strike you that you have declared Him to be in need! To be exalted above all things is for Divine Love a source of deepest pain. The pain of Divine Love is *just* this elevation—this eminence, alone. It longs to step down, to

break its solitude. It longs to behold in humanity a mirror of itself—another self whom it can speak to. Did you ever ask yourself why in teaching men to pray our Lord told them to pray first for the Father? Why did He bid them begin by saying "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done"? Was not *our* need of daily bread more pressing? No. Christ knew that there was no hunger equal to the hunger of the Father. He knew that the heart of Divine Love was famished. He knew that the utmost human destitution cannot *approach* in its intensity the want felt by Divine Love. Therefore before all things He bids us pity the impoverished heart of God—pity it and pray for it. He bids us remember the *Divine* want ere we remember the human. Think of the Father! He cries. Think of the Father's loneliness, think of the Father's prayer! Remember Love's poverty *without* love! Remember the solitude of a God without communion! Let *Him* have your first sympathy, your earnest prayer!

O Thou who hast taken into Thy hand the

work of the Father, I shall pray continually for Thee! I often pray *to* Thee; I shall learn to pray *for* Thee. I have been taught from my childhood to say "for Christ's sake," "for Jesus' sake," but I did not realise its meaning. I never understood that I was asking for Thy *joy*. I understand it now; and my old prayer gets a new significance for me. I thought I was asking for my *own* happiness; I see that unconsciously I was asking for Thine. Be it no *more* unconsciously, O Lord! Whatever I ask, let it be for *Thy* sake! If I desire gold, let it be for Thy manger! If I desire the gift of song, let it be for Thy Bethlehem! If I desire the hour of mirth, let it be for Thy Cana! If I desire the joys of home, let it be for Thy Nazareth! Let me treasure the alabaster for *Thee,* the spices for Thee, the household wares of Bethany for Thee! If I ask wealth, let it be to feed Thy poor! If I ask health, let it be to bear Thy journeys! If I ask eloquence, let it be to repeat Thine accents! If I ask genius, let it be to plead Thy cause! If I ask beauty, let it be to reflect Thine image! If I ask the

strength of a resurrection body, let it be to help Thy burden up the Dolorous Way! So shall my supplications be songs of love; my prayers will all be praises when they are prayers for Thee.

"THE PROVINCES OF LOVE"

"I am the rose of the plain and the lily of the valleys."
Solomon's Song ii. 1.

THE Song of Solomon depicts man's ideal of the highest love. It says that perfect love must be fit for two spheres —the plain and the valley; it must be a rose to the one and a lily to the other. For, it is between these spheres that human life oscillates. Our place of abode is either in the valley or on the plain; we never abide on the mountain. Between the valley and the plain we divide our days. Some are days of the valley—days of depression, days of downcastness, days when the spirit is low. At these times we have no solace like love; the touch of a kindred sympathy blunts the edge of our pain. But I think our most frequent moments are on the plain—the sphere of the commonplace. In the valley we have a sense of something to *bear*. But on the

plain we have a sense that there is nothing either to *do* or to bear. We are dull, not through life's burden, but through life's monotony—through the yearning for something new; we want a rose in our path. And we find it in love. We find the new thing in that old, old story, ancient yet ever young—that story which destroys the distinction between yesterday and to-day and to-morrow.

Even such, O Christ, is the power of my love for Thee! It fits me both for the valley and for the plain. It is my lily for the valley; it is my rose for the plain. When I am down in the vale, oppressed with my toiling and my spinning, it becomes my lily; it teaches me to be spontaneous, to forget myself in Thee. And when I stand on the common plain seeing only life's monotony, it becomes my rose; it makes my prosaic world a garden. I thank Thee for these flowers of Thy love. I thank Thee that it has strengthened me both for the valley and for the plain. I thank Thee that it has been at once my lily and my rose. Ever let there remain to me these two flowers of Thy love—the flower of self-forgetfulness and the flower of out-

ward radiance! When I am down in the valley, when I am weighted with the burden of care, make Thy love my *lily!* Help me in the sunshine of Thy presence to grow as the lily grows —unconscious of the earth that hems it round! When I am walking on the level plain, when my soul is drooping for want of something new, make Thy love my *rose!* Help me, through the sunshine of Thy presence, to see the radiance of common things—the glow beyond colour, the grace beyond form, the light that never shone on sea or shore! So shall my valley be harmless; so shall my plain be glorious. Each side shall have its flower—love's flower. And the flower of Thy love shall keep me both in plain and vale—keep me in the absence of the heights, keep me in the presence of the great deep.

"THE LATENESS OF ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE"

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham."—Genesis xxii. 1.

"AFTER these things"—as the sequel to all the experiences of his life. Is not that a strange place to assign to a sacrificial temptation! Should we not be disposed to test a man at the *beginning* of his career! Why is Abraham put to the test at sunset? Why has the sacrificial hour waited for his closing years? Is not youth the season in which a man's power of sacrifice would be the truest measure of him? No, it is not. It is, no doubt, the season when we hear most *about* sacrifice. Young people often cultivate melancholy, often figure to themselves wonderful plans for self-surrender. But we do not much value these. Why? Because we feel that they are offering to give up something they have

never tasted. It is not at the *threshold* of life that life reveals its beauty; it is after you have climbed the stairs. The romance of youth is the search of youth for another world. The reason why in after life romance dies is because actual things become precious. Only when they have become precious is the life of sacrifice a life of unselfishness. You must have the Transfiguration previous to the Cross. The gift must be dear to you ere the giving to another can be sweet. Before God tempts Abraham He must appeal to a joy of Abraham's heart, "Thy son whom thou lovest."

And so, my Lord, has it been with *Thy* sacrifice! The life Thou hast given for me was not a life which by Thee was counted light in weight. Thine was no pessimist offering—no surrender of a *withered* flower. Not because earth to Thee was barren didst Thou resign it. Not because its streams had ceased to gladden Thee didst Thou desert their banks. Earth was *not* barren to Thee; its streams had never lost their joyous music. Thou wert "crowned with glory and honour" for Thy sacrifice. The life resigned by Thee was a life of beauty—a life

whose beauty was recognised by Thee, enjoyed by Thee. Thou hadst tasted of every pure delight ere Thou wert called to lay life down; hadst revelled with the bird of the air; hadst sat in the temple of wisdom; hadst ministered to the marriage feast; hadst watched the gambols of children; hadst known the delights of friendship; hadst felt the endearments of home; hadst experienced the luxury of human devotion. Life had opened every door to Thee. Not because life was poor, but because love was rich, didst Thou climb that cross of pain. So would I climb with Thee! I would climb for love—for love alone. I would not seek heaven because I despaired of earth; I would bring my earthly treasures *into* heaven. I would not fly to Thee in the *winter* of my heart. I would come when my heart was summer—when its leaves were green. I would bring Thee the full-blown rose, the ripest fruit, the finest songs of the grove. I would break the alabaster box for Thee, not when it was empty, but when it was laden with perfume. I would make my sacrifice a sacrifice of praise.

"THE FIRE WITHOUT THE LAMB"

"Isaac said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"—Genesis xxii. 7.

THE experience of Isaac in the hour of sacrifice is not an unusual one. There are many who feel the inward fire, but who have no object to lay upon it; they cry "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb!" There are many who would be clergymen if they had the means. There are many who would be missionaries if they had the talent. There are many who would be sick-nurses if they had the strength. To such the story of Isaac should bring deep comfort. It tells of a man who had the fire in his heart, but nothing in his hand. And the fire in the heart was accepted as a *substitute* for something in the hand. Isaac could have said, in the language of the hymn, "Nothing in my hands I bring." He had no mission-field to till, no

hospital to tend, no district to visit. He had nothing to give but himself—his will, his inward fire; there was no lamb. Yet God accepted him *without* the lamb—without the mission-field, without the tended district, without the hospital service. God accepted the *inward* combustion, the fire in the soul, the seal in the spirit, the intention of the heart. The lamb was only slain in imagination; but the imagination was counted a reality; the offering was deemed complete.

So shall it be with thee, my brother! When thy spirit is willing and thy flesh is weak, remember Isaac! Remember that the lamb God sees is the lamb in the heart! I hear thee speak of the difference between the imaginary and the real. But to thy Father the most real thing about thee *is* thine imagining. Not what thou art able to *do,* but what thou art able to *will,* is the measure of thee. The world will judge thee by thy deeds; the Father will judge thee by thine aspirings. Thou canst not build a tower that will reach to heaven; but thou canst build a *thought* that will reach to heaven. And thy thought is the building which the *Father* sees.

The rainbow in the flood of thy sins is not thy power to fly; it is thy power to feel; this is the true arch between earth and heaven. It makes the comfort of thy Father; let it be thy comfort, too! Thy flesh is weak, but thy spirit is ready; keep thine eye upon thy *spirit!* When thou art impressed with how little thou hast done for Christ, remember what thou hast *planned* to do! Remember what fields thou hast traversed for Him in *fancy!* Remember the long roads on which thy love *desired* to go! Remember the stormy seas on which thy devotion *longed* to sail! Remember the hills of difficulty on which thy feet *aspired* to stand! Remember the battles thou wert *willing* to fight, the burdens thou wert *eager* to bear, the succour thou wert *sighing* to send! These are thine unspoken sacrifices; these are thy moments on Moriah's Mount. The fuel in the heart seems to have been fired in vain; but in the surrender of thine inmost will God has provided a *lamb* for the burnt offering.

"ASCETICISM"

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God."—Genesis xxii. 12.

AND so, my Father does not need any pain! I used to think that He did. I used to think that pain was inseparable from holiness. I used to measure a man's piety by his gloom. The scene on Mount Moriah puts this error to flight. Why is Abraham called to suffer pain? Because he is a man of ripe holiness? No; because he is a man whose ripeness has not been proved. The moment it *is* proved, the pain ceases. Isaac is given back to him. The sacrifice is repealed. The act of asceticism is forbidden. The process of immolation is pronounced unnecessary. It is pronounced unnecessary because holiness is proved, because the gates of the religious life have been

opened, " Put not thine hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God."

So shall it be with thee, O my soul! Why admirest thou the men who *court* religious pain! Why buildest thou a monument to the sons of the desert—the Abrahams who have given up their Isaac just *in order that* they might feel sad! Thinkest thou that such sadness is dear to thy Father! When His voice is heard in the garden in the cool of the day, will it please Him to find Adam in a heat of perplexity! Shall love be glad when its object trembles at its tread! Shall love be glad when its presence is greeted with tears! Shall love be glad when its footfall on the stair awakes a cry of agony! Nay, my soul, thy Father is waiting for thy *joy*. Thou callest thy days of joy summer days; so does thy Father. Thy summer is thy ripeness. Thou hast not perfect liberty with *man* till thou hast basked in the light of *God*. It is not on the top of the hill that thou art called to give up thine Isaac; it is at the hill*foot*. It is from thy *worldly* state that thy Father demands asceticism. Is it not written, " You are not straitened in Christ; you

are straitened in your own affections!" It is not Christ that narrows thee; it is the *want* of Christ. To whom does He say, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles"! Is it to the *developed* band of disciples? No, it is to the *primitive* band. It is to the men that have not yet *seen* the kingdom, the power, and the glory. But, my soul, if *thou* wilt reach the summit of Mount Moriah, it will be otherwise with *thee*. From the top of the hill thou shalt see the glory of the outspread land. Isaac shall be restored to thee on the mountain summit. Old limits shall be broken; old prohibitions shall be annulled. For thee the way of the Gentiles shall be opened. The freedom of the city shall be given thee—the freedom of the City of God. Thou shalt be lord of the Sabbath in fellowship with the Son of Man—thou shalt walk in the cornfields with untarnished holiness. Thine shall be the joys of Cana; thine shall be the joys of Bethany. For thee all the birds of Galilee shall sing; for thee all the flowers of Sharon shall bloom. The world shall be thine; life shall be thine; principalities and powers shall be thine. The river of God's pleasures shall give

thee back *thy* pleasures. The fountain of Divine life shall return the spray of the earthly sea. Thy surrendered Isaac shall meet thee at the top of the hill.

"GOD'S HIGHEST GLORY"

"Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name."
Psalm cxxxviii. 2.

I UNDERSTAND the idea to be "Thou hast magnified Thy still voice in the *soul* above all Thy majesty in *nature.*" The "name" of God means His "majesty;" the "word" of God means His "voice in the individual soul." The Psalmist declares that the latter, unobtrusive as it is, is the most direct testimony to the Divine. I agree with the Psalmist; and none the less because it is not the common opinion. The common opinion is that the sense of God's majesty in nature should dwarf our estimate of our own personal puny thoughts. I cannot receive this saying. I have heard it said that a study of astronomy must shake my faith in Christ—must reveal my tiny life over against a boundless universe—must make me say "What is *man!*" But I have

always felt that the greatest thing in the world is just an individual soul. I magnify one throb of consciousness above all the united masses of the material creation. There is nothing overpowering to my pride in vast spaces. All the spaces of the universe do not wake in me the wonder that I get from the experience of a single grief or joy. If I were told to a certainty that these starry worlds were uninhabited, I think that, instead of looking up to them reverently, I should look down on them patronisingly. The only thing that keeps them up in *my* sky is the thought that perhaps individual souls are there—that perhaps within them there dwells the resignation of a patient sufferer, or beats the hopeful heart of a little child.

My soul, art thou trembling beneath the stars? Art thou oppressed by the weight of thine own nothingness? Art thou looking up into the night, with the Israelite of old, and saying "When I consider Thy heavens, how can there be room for *man?* Rather shouldst thou say "When I consider *man,* I find room for the heavens." It is *thou* that *justifiest* the

starry spaces. They have no magnificence to the heart if they be not the habitation of individual souls. In vain we cast the eye over myriad fields of light, in vain we cast the telescope over fields *beyond* the eye, in vain we cast the imagination over fields beyond the *telescope;* the heart will still ask the question, " For *whom* is this glory? " In vain the spaces sparkle if there be no sense of sight; in vain the lustre lingers if there be no sense of beauty; in vain the worlds are woven if there be no sense of home. Not light but love, not space but spirit, is the glory of thy Father. All the outgoings of the morning do not equal thy morning prayer. All the reflection of the evening sun pales before the reflectiveness of thy evening hour. Thou mayst be an infant crying in the infinite night; yet thine infancy is bigger than the night's infinitude. Magnify thine office, O my soul!

"AN AGNOSTICISM THAT NEED NOT DESPAIR"

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord."—Isaiah l. 10.

A GOD-FEARING agnostic!—that is an expression which one never hears in this world; it seems a contradiction in terms. Yet in this passage a man is described in almost exactly these words. There is brought before us one who fears God, obeys the servant of God, and yet walks in darkness. When the prophet asks, "What man is *he?*" we are disposed to answer, "He is a creature of the imagination." And yet verily he is a creature of the street; you will meet him every day. There is among us a man who keeps the law of Sinai, though he has never seen the smoke and flame of Sinai. He has no light from the mount; yet he stumbles very little

on the plain. He is a sceptic about Elijah's chariot; but he ministers to Elijah's hunger. He does not *say* "Our Father, which art in heaven;" but he makes an excellent son to his parents on earth. He does not attach himself to a church; but he is enrolled in the brotherhood of man. He does not speak the words, "Thy will be done;" but he bears bravely many human ills. He prays not publicly for daily bread; but he answers many prayers of others for it. He supplicates not the *Divine* pardon; but he often asks pardon of his brother. How shall I account for this man? As the prophet seems to account for him. I think he is a creature of unconscious faith—faith by heredity, faith derived from ancestors, faith so habitual to generations that its presence has ceased to be perceived. He is like a man in a room where a clock is ticking. He says he does not hear it; it is because he hears it too well.

In the ranks of Thy great army, O Lord, there are souls that never *consciously* enlisted there. There are souls that have never taken the oath of allegiance, yet who follow Thy march up the arduous way. When I number

Thine army, I do not count these in—do not *call* them Thy soldiers. I am wrong! help me to revise my judgment! I have read of Mary Magdalene meeting Thee at the sepulchre and taking Thee for the gardener. I have read of two disciples walking with Thee toward Emmaus and burning at Thy words, yet knowing not who spoke to them. Both Mary and the disciples would at that time have said, "I have not *seen* the risen Christ." Yet they *had* seen Thee, they had *talked* with Thee; the Lord was in that place and they knew it not. Even so, there are many of us who are only on the Emmaus road. There are those who feel the burning at the heart, but attribute its enthusiasm to human causes; they know not that they speak with *Thee*. Thou shalt enroll them in Thy celestial army! They wrestle for Thee, like Jacob's angel, until the breaking of the day; but, again like Jacob's angel, they have assumed no name. Thou shalt give them a name; Thou shalt write *Thy* name upon their foreheads; Thou shalt fix their designation by pronouncing the words of blessing, "They shall be called the children of God."

"THE REJECTED OF THE WORLD"

"They say unto Him, No man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard."—Matt. xx. 7.

THE men here spoken of are the men standing idle in the market-place at the eleventh hour. They have come to the last hour of the working day, and still no man has hired them. Jesus employs the world's *un*employed. He finds a place in the vineyard for those whom the world considers ineligible. Heaven has more trust in earth than earth has in herself. Why are so many standing idle at the eleventh hour? It is through the distrust of their fellows. There are more available workers in the world than man recognises. We neglect all lives that have at any time gone wrong. We will not trust the shipwrecked mariners with a second ship. We will not admit the possibility of fragrance in the box of ointment which has been

broken. The life which has caught a stain is thereafter a banished life, a proscribed life, a life not to be utilised. Jesus has more *faith* in man. He *refuses* to disregard the men of the eleventh hour. He refuses to despair of those whom *we* have *discarded*. He insists in giving a chance to unlikely subjects. Has He not proved right! His *greatest* worker was a man of the eleventh hour—the man Paul. The fellow-labourers of that man would not *look* at him; but the risen Christ *broke bread* with him; the fragments that remained from that feast have been the spiritual food of the world!

O Thou Divine Love, I thank Thee for the depth of Thy hope for man! Many of us belong to the eleventh hour; we have been rejected by our fellows; we have been turned from the threshold of the vineyard. We made a false step in the past; we committed some mistake in judgment; we yielded to some hour of temptation. And on the strength of that error the world has cast us out; there is no room in *her* vineyard for the feet that have stumbled. But there is room in Thine. Thou hast gone forth at the eleventh hour in soli-

tude. There were no *human* hirers of labour at that hour; Thou hast trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Thee. The eleventh hour brought no bidders but Thee. Nobody will give work to Saul of Tarsus. Nobody will give work to the penitent thief. Nobody will give work to the late-coming Nicodemus. Their fellow-men are all afraid of them, are shrinking from them. But Thou art not afraid. Thou hast more trust in the world than the world has in itself. Thou hast gathered them in—the unlikely ones, the man-rejected ones. Thou hast risked what my brother would not risk. Thou hast put Thy trust in the soiled garment, in the besmeared robe, in the dilapidated visage. Thou hast accepted the life at its lowest, the night at its darkest. Thou hast called human souls into the *vineyard* from the *graveyard*. I marvel at Thy faith, O Son of Man!

"THE MORNING AND THE AFTERNOON"

"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace."
Isaiah lv. 12.

IS there not a subsiding here! We go out with *joy,* but we are led onward with *peace!* Is not the transition from joy to peace a diminution of energy? No, it is a *balance* of energy. It is the change from a rapid river to a deep summer ocean. You might say, in a sense, that the rapid river *subsides* into the deep summer ocean; to subside means to sit down, and this is a sitting down. Yet, in its settled calm, the ocean has more energy than the river; no one would *compare* the extent of their powers. Human life exhibits some such transition. It passes from joy to peace. It begins with joy. It goes out into the world with youth's elastic step; it sees in anticipation a city whose streets are paved

with gold. By and by the excitement ceases. The tints become more sober, the paths less roseate. Romance settles down into duty; daily work takes the place of heroic aspiration; joy becomes peace. Yet the duty is stronger than the romance; the daily work is more difficult than the heroic aspiration; the peace is more powerful than the joy. Love in the nest is better than love on the wing. It is less brilliant, but it has more energy. What is the test of energy? It is permanence. Peace is more permanent than joy. Joy flutters for an hour, but its very fluttering makes it weary; peace never moves its wing for flight, but in its quiet nest it can abide for ever.

My soul, it is so with thy life in Jesus! Thou, too, hast thy time of going out and thy time of quiet progress—thy period of joy and thy period of peace. At first thou art lifted up. Earth recedes from thy view and the inhabitants thereof become as grasshoppers; it seems to thee as if thou couldst reach heaven ere nightfall. By and by thy wing becomes weary and thou fallest to the ground. Thou art compelled to tread the earth

once more. The golden streets of the New Jerusalem are exchanged for lane and alley. The prospect of heroic sacrifices is replaced by the call to trivial daily duty; and, instead of the command to bid the world good-bye, there comes the prosaic message, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard!" Rejoice, my soul! thy fall is a rise. Thy peace is larger than thy joy. Thy peace is better than thy poetry. Has a cloud hid thy Transfiguration glory? Weep not! that hiding is a revealing; it brings thee down to the plain. Is there silence in heaven for the space of half an hour? Weep not! the silence of the New Jersualem bells will let thee hear the sound of *earth's* many voices. The joy of the morning can make thee forget thy cares; but the peace of the afternoon recalls thee to the memory of the cares of *man!*

"THE REMEDY FOR A WOUNDED HEART"

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."—Psalm cxlvii. 3.

THE setting of a broken limb does not involve an immediate healing of the wound. Neither does the setting of a broken heart. A broken heart is a heart whose movement is paralysed. It is a heart which has lost the use of its wing, and is incapacitated for locomotion; it is unfit to take its part in the world. To heal the breakage is to *restore* its power of movement, and *enable* it to do its work in life. But to heal the breakage is not to heal the *wound;* that may still continue for a long time. Even Christ does not promise an immediate healing of the wound. But He promises an immediate *binding* of it. He promises to arrest the flow of its bleeding, so that we shall be able to move about in spite

of it, to do our work in spite of it. What is this wonderful ligament with which Christ binds the wounds of the once-broken heart? It is the sympathy with another's pain; it is the remembrance that I suffer not alone. The sympathy with my brother restrains my *personal* outflow. It takes away the egotism of my grief. I no longer feel that a *strange* thing has befallen me. I no longer resent the rain-cloud as a special wrong. I feel that it is not special—that it is universal. It is the thought of this that stops the outward bleeding of my heart. It makes me refuse to *show* my wound. It forbids me to cry out in the streets as if I were a solitary sufferer. It says, "Think what your brother must feel; he has the same pains as you!" It bids me count the burdens of the passers-by; and, as I count, I forget to remember my own.

Lord, when I am labouring, and heavy laden, bind me with *Thy* yoke! Nothing *but* Thy yoke can bind my wounds. Thy yoke is humanity—a sense of the common pain. There is nothing that will cover my personal scars like *Thy Cross*. Let me join the procession to Thy

Cross; let me help Thee to bear it up the Dolorous Way! Grant me the power to share Thy pain—the universal pain! Nothing else will bind my wounds. I have heard a singer tell how, when his burden fell into the sea, the sorrow of *others* overshadowed him. But Thine is the opposite order; the sorrows of others *first* overshadow me and *then* my burden falls. In vain shall I stand on the bridge at midnight and gaze into the dark waters if all I see therein is the shadow of my own grief! Reveal *Thy* shadow, O Christ—the shadow of humanity! Let me see in the water Thy marred visage—marred with the sorrows of Man! My heart will never cease to be hot and restless until I have felt the heat and restlessness of *other* hearts—the burden of Thy Cross. Thy shadow will bring me light. Thy darkness will bring me dawn. The carrying of *Thy* Cross will give lightness to my own. The pity for *Thy* tears will wipe all mine from the eyes. My bleeding wounds will be bound when I hear the words, "Good and faithful servant, enter thou into the pain of thy Lord!"

"THE SAFEGUARD AGAINST DESPAIR"

"Strengthen the things which remain."
Rev. iii. 2.

THERE are two courses which have been proposed as a safeguard against despair. The first and most common is the disparagement of the thing lost. It is the method of the fox in Æsop's fable; the grapes become sour when they are lifted out of reach. Many a schoolboy, when he loses the prize, says it is not worth having. Many a man when he fails to get an appointment says, "It is a poor thing; I wouldn't have taken it." To speak thus is to give loss a great victory. It is to assert that we have not only lost the *object* but have been deprived of our love for it. Never encourage such a sentiment! I agree with Tennyson that it is better to keep your grief than to lose your love. But there

is another way of avoiding despair when loss comes. It is the way prescribed by the man of Patmos—the man who was separated from his dearest by a cruel sea. Does he say that these things separated from him are not worth having? On the contrary, he longs for the time when there shall be "no more" sea. But meantime there is another refuge, a better refuge, than the sourness of the grapes removed from him; it is the sweetness of the grapes that are *left* to him. To all souls and to all Churches which have suffered loss he stretches out his hands, and cries, "Strengthen the things which remain!"

O thou who in the time of loss seest no refuge but either despair or disparagement, I show thee a more excellent way! I would not have thee disparage thy dead. I would not have thee drop them from thy memory as if they had never been. But I would have thee to turn memory into present love—to make thy remembrance of the dead a means of devotion to the living. I have heard the child in Mrs. Hemans' poem say, "O while my brother with me played, would I had loved

him more!" It is a very pretty sentiment and a very common experience. But I do not think the full moral is given when the child in this poem is told "Thy brother is in heaven." If we stop with that statement we nip in the bud the aspiration after better conduct. I would say to the child: "You have other playmates who are still on *earth*. They, too, may be soon called from you. Whenever you think of how much more you might have done for the brother you have lost, remember those playmates who remain! Remember that when *they* go you will have the same remorse for *them;* try as much as you can to love them now!" So would I say to the child; and so, my brother, I say to thee. Sink not in despair at the memory of thy shortcomings to those whom thou canst help no longer! Turn that memory into present love! Remember those whom thou *canst* help! Remember the children that are *still* playing in the market-place! Remember the needs that can still be met, the wrongs that can still be righted! Remember the hands that still are unwarmed, the feet that still are weary, the hearts that still are sad! Remem-

ber to say the word of kindness *today!* Love the more deeply because death has a deep shadow! Lavish upon the morning what the night may prevent thee from giving! Strengthen, strengthen the things which remain!

"THE SPHERE WHERE CALM IS ESSENTIAL"

"Let not your heart be troubled."—John xiv. 1.

TROUBLED things are not always on that account unbeautiful. Why do we find more beauty in the sea than in a pool? Just because it is more capable of being troubled. Why do we find more beauty in a strong intellect than in a weak one? Just because it is more capable of being troubled. The unrest of a material object and the unrest of a human intellect is the sign of energy. But the unrest of a heart is not. The unrest of a heart is the sign of *want* of energy. The sea shows its power in a storm; the intellect shows its power in a difficulty; but the heart only shows its power in a great calm. The heart's power is the heart's fixedness. The glory of a ship is its ability to sail; but the glory of a heart is its ability to lie at anchor—

to be moored somewhere. My heart has no strength when it is sailing in search of harbour; it is only strong when it is cabled to the shore. I have read that an angel came down to trouble a *pool;* but I am never told that an angel came down to trouble a *heart.* Many things trouble the heart, but none of them are angels. It needs a cloudless trust, a sure confidence, a settled calm. It needs not only to love, but to *be* loved, and to *know* that it is loved. Doubt of love's reality is the heart's paralysis; despair of love's reality is the heart's death. Whatever *else* be tossed upon life's sea, let not your *heart* be troubled!

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast been so solicitous for the peace of my *heart!* It proves to me that Thou hast prepared a place for my *love.* Thou wouldst never have said, "Let not thy heart be troubled!" if Thou hadst *no* place for my love. How could my heart be calm if love were a finite thing, a perishable thing! If Thou hadst no mansion for my love, it were mockery to say, "Let not your heart be troubled!" My heart cannot be quiet amid autumn leaves; it can build no nest in the

cemetery. Therefore Thy words can only mean, "Put away your *fear* of the cemetery; your heart shall be satisfied—satisfied evermore!" I thank Thee for that promise! My heart cannot vibrate until it is satisfied. Other sides of my being vibrate best when *un*satisfied. My aspirations come from my mind's *hunger*. My fancy is a cry for something more than I have. My desire for knowledge is wakened by what I do not know. But my heart is wakened by what it possesses. Its pulses cannot beat in uncertainty. It cannot work till it "rests from its labours." It must be satisfied early in the morning—ere it goes out to the toils of the day. I bless Thee for that morning glow! I bless Thee that before the journey Thou hast led my heart to the fountain! I bless Thee that its vision of heaven has preceded its walk on earth! I bless Thee that it has seen eternity ere it has compassed time! Only the *un*troubled heart can walk upon the troubled sea; therefore I praise Thee for this antecedent calm!

"THE INADEQUACY OF MERE SURROUNDINGS"

"There was war in heaven; the dragon fought, and his angels."—Revelation xii. 7.

AND so an environment is not sufficient to make one good or to make one happy! We hear a great deal in our days about environment being *everything*. The man who wrote the Apocalypse had a different idea, and he expresses it very forcibly. He takes the finest environment that ever was conceived—heaven. He pictures it in all its beauty—with its pearly streets and golden gates—with its rivers clear as crystal, and its fountains of living water, and its trees of luscious fruit, and its population of holy angels. Into this paradise he introduces a second company—a band of *un*holy angels. One would think this new band had every chance, with such fine scenery and such godly compan-

ions. But it is all in vain. In a brief space they have made a hell of heaven! They have found their surroundings quite intolerable! It is a striking picture! They have actually got *into* heaven! They have seen the environment of the redeemed! They have gazed on the white robes! They have caught the spray of the fountains! They have basked in the light that has no setting! And yet they are in misery, in unrest; in the land of peace they are at war!

Art thou sure, my brother, that heaven would to thee be a state of peace? It is not enough for thee that there be a crystal river and a sparkling fountain. It is no guarantee for thy peace that there be green leaves and rich fruits. There are states of mind in which beauty itself is a thing on which we make war. If heaven were promised thee to-day, wouldst thou write down thy name among the saved? To do so might be premature. The dragon and his bad angels had more than a *promise* of heaven; they had actually got in. But they were not happy in. They brought their misery in with them. All the powers of nature had

combined to make them glad; all the powers of mind were already theirs; but their *hearts* were not at rest. And because their hearts were not at rest, their *heaven* was not at rest; the sea of glass looked stormy. So would it look to thee if thou hadst not rest within. In vain the glassy sea would meet thine eye! In vain the golden harps would greet thine ear! In vain the luscious fruits would touch thy lips! In vain the smile of Christ would seek thy soul! If that soul were in unrest, it would see in heaven nothing but war; the trees would whisper it, the streams would murmur it, the birds would warble it. The scene through which thou travellest is half-painted by *thyself;* it takes the colours of thine own heart. If thou bringst lurid colours into God's dwelling place, the sacred courts will catch the lurid glow. Come not without the wedding garment! Come not without the antecedent joy! Come not without a song learned from the lessons of earth! Come not without an olive branch from the waters of the flood! If there be peace on earth, there will be no war in heaven!

"THE SANCTIFYING OF WORLDLY GIFTS"

"She brake the box."—Mark xiv. 3.

IT is the alabaster box of ointment that is spoken of. I have often asked myself, *why* did she break it? I can see why she poured out all the ointment; a heart so devoted could never have given to Jesus by halves. But why destroy the costly vessel that held it? Surely that was a thing she might have kept for herself? No, she could not. She had no use for it after Christ had been served. Love counts nothing a treasure which it cannot spend upon its object. When its object is anointed, all the wealth of Ophir is superfluous. This woman broke the costly thing, not because she was indifferent to money, but because the aim of her money was achieved. That aim was the anointing of Jesus. As long as Jesus was not anointed she strove eagerly

for this earthly treasure. I have no doubt she spent a long time in gathering for its purchase. Perhaps many said, "What a miser she is!" Measured by the eye, she *might* seem to have the greed of gold. But her gold only glittered in the light of Jesus. It was for *Him* she gathered; it was for Him she saved. She made rich for His anointing. When the anointing was complete, the gold *lost* its glitter. Wealth ceased to have an object. She gave up gathering; she gave up saving. She had no interest in the alabaster when it had served its purpose for Christ; she brake the box.

My brother, what gives thee a title to pray *for* worldly wealth? It is thy love for Christ—for humanity. I would *bid* thee aspire to the gifts of earth if I were sure they would be sought for *Jesus*. I would say, "*Keep* the alabaster box as long as there are weary feet to be anointed, as long as there are bruised hearts to be refreshed!" All such weary feet are *His* feet, all such bruised hearts are *His* heart; what thou doest to the least thou doest unto *Him*. Gather thy gifts for *Him!* The man-

ger still holds the members of His body; the swaddling bands still wrap the Christ that is to be. Are there none from the east or from the west to bring gold or frankincense or myrrh? Are there none to sing songs of Bethlehem to those who watch by night—to cheer the sleepless invalid in the ward of pain? Are there none to take the persecuted child into Egypt—to find a house of refuge for those rejected by the world? Are there none to provide a home at Nazareth for the growth of the coming Jesus? Are there none to minister to the life that has been assailed in the wilderness of temptation? Would not the power be *worth* living for, worth praying for! Live for such wealth, pray for such wealth! Covet, for Christ's sake, each gift of body, each gift of mind! Tune the harp for Him; train the voice for Him; twine the wreath for Him; plant the flower for Him; weave the garment for Him; keep thy hold on the world for Him! Break not the alabaster box till thou hast anointed Jesus!

"THE UNUTTERED COIN"

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.—1 Cor. xiii. 3.

WHAT Paul means is, that no material donation is equal in value to a wish of the heart. That is a very startling statement. It is not our common view. You meet a ragged beggar. You give him a coin. As he departs, a sense of deep pity rises in your heart, and follows him down the street. You feel what a short way your coin will go to make the man happy; you breathe the prayer, "God help the poor creature!" Your opinion is that this last part of the transaction does not count. Paul says it is in *God's* sight the part which counts for most. What *He* calls your charity is not the thing bestowed, but the thing you would *like* to bestow. He measures your munificence, not by your gift, but by your sympathy. I have read

in the Acts that He set up in heaven a monument to Cornelius for his charitable *prayers*. The man who gets the grandest monument in heaven is the man whose love goes beyond his contributions. However big his contributions be, his love must go beyond them. No gift should be able to express the whole heart; if it does, the heart must be small. At the moment when you have given your best, your love cries, "It is nothing to what I should *like* to do!" And the Father says, "This *unuttered* coin is the measure of you; to this unspoken sympathy I will raise a monument."

Build to my love, O Father, build to my love! Not by what I can *do* for my brother do Thou judge me! My deeds are paltry and poor. What can the pebble do that I cast into the sea of human misery! It cannot lessen the depth of that sea. But my heart is bigger than my hand; build to my heart! My love is stronger than my leading; build to my love! The Psalmist prayed that Thou wouldst accept all his burnt offerings. There is not one of mine *worth* accepting! But Thou hast promised to accept the *unuttered* coin, the

sympathy that cannot speak. I have seen in Thy heaven a monument raised to the munificence of a pauper! I marvelled at the paradox. I could not understand how Thou shouldst commemorate the munificence of one who lived in a garret and received her bread from the pity of the crowd. But I forgot *Thy* measurement of munificence. I forgot that the heart of a pauper might have golden wishes for humanity. I forgot that it is to the *heart's* gold the heavenly tablet is raised. Help me to remember *that* gold, O Lord! When I feel my earthly nothingness, when I deplore my human poverty, help me to remember that gold! When I lament that I am a burden, help me to remember that gold! When I murmur against my uselessness, when I bemoan my forced inaction, when I spurn the invalid couch on which I am compelled to lie, help me to remember that gold! Let me see the riches of the *un*uttered coin, of the *un*spoken sympathy; let me behold the monument Thou hast erected to munificent *prayer!* Let me learn that the highest subscriber is the donor of *love!*

"THE EMANCIPATION FROM SCHOOL"

"Having abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances."—Ephesians ii. 15.

WHEN a boy finally leaves the classroom the methods of school are for him abolished. He forgets the old rules for doing things. He adds up his sums in the office by a much quicker process than that used in the class. He speaks good grammar without remembering one rule of syntax. He modulates his voice without recalling one precept of the elocution master. He acts with perfect politeness without recollecting a single passage from the book of etiquette. So, too, is it in Christ's world. When I reach the spirit of Christ I forget the old rules for being good. I have heard a child say, "I am *tired* of being good!" I do not wonder at such a speech. Everything committed to memory

by rule is essentially tiresome. Goodness is no exception. If I have to count every morning how many kind things I shall do for my brother during the day, I shall be very weary ere the day is done. But when there comes to me that *one* thing called *love,* I cease to be careful and troubled about the *many* things. Love gives me the instinct of the bee. It becomes my immediate monitor. It abolishes rules. It guides me by the impulse of the moment. It says: Take no thought what you shall speak. Love will tell you *on the spot* what you shall speak. You will be like the lily of the field—growing spontaneously, like the bird of the air—singing unconsciously. Your goodness will be innate, and therefore irrepressible. You will have no need to commit the ten commandments; grace in the heart can dispense with stores in the memory; Moses can *leave* the mount when *Christ* appears.

O Love, Divine Love, set me free from the yoke of weariness! *Thy* yoke is easy and Thy burden is light! Thou canst make me an instinctive thinker, a spontaneous worker, an extemporaneous speaker. The schoolmaster can

lead me into the paths of rightousness; but when *he* leads me thither, the pastures are *not* green and the waters are *not* quiet. Thou, O Love, canst make the pastures green; Thou, canst make the waters quiet! With Thee I shall run and *not* be weary; with Thee I shall walk and *not* faint. I shall not count how often I must forgive my brother; I shall forgive him only once—once for all. I shall not weep that I am taxed for the poor; I shall deem it a privilege to pay. I shall not congratulate myself that I was absent from a scene of misery; I shall feel bound to *seek out* that scene. I shall not ask nervously whether a task is commanded in the Bible; if it is commanded in my *heart,* I shall *anticipate* the Bible. I shall be dead to the law when *Thou* shalt come. I shall tear up the old rules when *Thou* shalt come. I shall abolish the school lessons when *Thou* shalt come. I shall enter *life's* playground when *Thou* shalt come. I shall be free as a bird when *Thou* shalt come. Even so come, Divine Love, come quickly!

"THE TEST OF SELF-EMPTYING"

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."
Zechariah xiii. 1.

A FOUNTAIN of sacrifice opened in Jerusalem! a sacrificial fountain in the midst of a town, in the centre of the world's roar and traffic!—that is a strange thing. Yes, in religious life it is a hitherto unprecedented thing; it will only be found in Christ. All faiths have a fountain—a place of sacrifice. But the faith of Christ alone has a fountain in *Jerusalem*—the scene of temptation. Other faiths call me to sacrifice by calling me to leave the world; Christ calls me to sacrifice by keeping me *in* the world. My experience in Christ is no longer the experience of Abraham. I am not bidden to manifest my sacrifice by seeking the solitary place, the lonely hour. I am not bidden to get up early

in the morning when the world is asleep, to ascend to the hill-top where my brother is unseen. No, I am told to go into the city where my brother *is*. I am told that if I am seeking a sacrificial mission I shall best find it in the street—where the people gather, where the crowds jostle, where man competes with man. Not where the forest stretches, not where the desert lies, am I now to thread my way. The wood of the true Cross is not *there*. It is where man dwells, where life dwells, where conflict dwells. Is it not written that the voice of Christ is "like the sound of many waters"! And truly this is His glory. He leads us into "sounding" places—into places of noise and bustle. He brings us to the marriage feast, to the marketplace, to the kingdoms of the world, to the buyers and sellers in life's temple, to the jealousies of disciples, to the friction with opponents, to the competing interests of all. *Our course* is there because *His Cross* is there.

My soul, thine altar is at *Jerusalem!* It is easy for thee to feel humble in the vast forest. Thou art then alone with thy Father. Thou

art never tempted to compete with thy *Father;* thou fallest prostrate before Him. But amid the inhabitants of Jerusalem, amid the concourse of thy fellow-men, amid the rivalry of those who seem thine inferiors—it is hard to be humble *then!* It is easy to bend before the stars; it is easy to stoop beneath the dome of heaven. But to stoop to thy brother-man, to feel thy nothingness when Lazarus is begging at thy gate—*this* is the victory over pride—this, this is humility! To be poor in spirit in the presence of the kingdoms of *earth,* to be meek in the presence of the crouching, to be merciful to faults beneath thy nature, to make peace when thine adversary is weak, to mourn thy shortcomings when thou art the magnet of attraction to hundreds—this is the blessing of the mount, for this is the humility of the plain! There is no fountain so hard to bathe in as the fountain at Jerusalem.

"THE LATEST VOICE OF GOD"

"He shall not speak from Himself."
John xvi. 13.

IT is the Holy Spirit that is here spoken of —the ripest fruit of the religious life. I take the meaning of the passage to be that, when religion in the soul is perfected, it will not have a voice separate from other things, but will blend with all the voices of nature. In the early stages religion is apart from other things. We distinguish, in those days, between nature and grace, secular and sacred, world and Church, week-day and Sabbath. The voice of God does not come to us through the events of the common hour; it speaks "from itself"—from its own lofty height in the heavens. To hear it we must come out from the madding crowd into a region of purer air and more seraphic rest. So is it at the *beginning*. But our Lord says there is

a time coming when we shall think differently. He says there is a time coming when the voice of God shall *not* speak "from itself," but shall send its message through *secular* voices. There is a time coming when the services of religion shall not be limited to the sanctuary, when piety shall not be confined to prayer, when psalmody shall not be monopolised by the psalter. There is a time coming when the voice of the Spirit shall call from the windows of *man's* house. It shall call from the scenes of nature; it shall call from the heights of poetry; it shall call from the galleries of art. It shall speak from the crowded marketplace; it shall speak from the seat of custom, and from the wheels of traffic. It shall sound from the haunts of pleasure; from the dance and the music; from the holiday and the feast. No spot shall be without an altar, no scene shall escape a sacrifice; for the Cross that once was planted only at Jerusalem shall be carried to Cana of Galilee.

Hasten that time, O Lord—the time when *all* things shall carry Thy message! Thy message as yet can only come to me from Thyself;

I can only hear it in Thine own house. It is to Thy house that I go for revelation. It is within the walls of Thy temple that I look for the rending of the veil. I think of the world's voices as drowning *Thy* voice; it never occurs to me that they may be Thy telegrams. Tomorrow I shall know it—when Thy spirit shall come. Tomorrow I shall learn a new experience; the world *itself* shall reveal Thee. Thou shalt speak to me in voices not Thine own—voices which I used to call secular. Thou shalt speak to me in babbling brook and murmuring stream. I shall hear Thee in sighing wind and plashing fountain. I shall catch the tread of Thy feet in the haunts of the scientist; in what men call evolution I shall hear Thee climbing the hill. On every mount of aspiration I shall listen to Thy preaching; on every pinnacle of temptation I shall listen to Thy warning; in every valley of humiliation I shall listen to Thy Garden prayer. In all breaking of bread I shall see Thy hand. In all healing of pain I shall feel Thy touch. In all stilling of passion I shall read Thy mandate. In all marriage feasts I shall seek Thy pres-

ence. In all dreams of youth I shall behold Thy dove descending. In all Magdalene homes I shall hear Thy words of pardon. In all children's hospitals I shall discern Thine outstretched arms. Thy voice shall be the *world's* voice in the sweet by and by!

"THE PLACE FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH"

"Canst thou by searching find out God."
Job xi. 7.

NO; and why? Because I never begin to search for Him until I have found Him; God alone can create the search for God. That is the great difference between things material and things spiritual. In material things the search precedes the finding; in spiritual things the finding precedes the search. When a man goes out to seek for gold you may infer that he is materially poor, but when a man goes out to seek for God you may conclude that he is spiritually rich. In the case of the gold we see the shadow before we touch the substance; in our experience of God we first touch the substance and then see the shadow. When a child stretches out its hand and cries for the moon it is seeking

something which it will never find; but when a man stretches out his hand and cries for holiness he is seeking something which he has found already. No man can pray for the Divine Spirit except by the *voice* of that Spirit. Why is our Father so eager that we should pray for the kingdom? Is it because our prayer for goodness will *make* us good? No, it is because our prayer for goodness proves us to be good already. When did Abraham begin to search for the land of Canaan? When he got into it. He wandered up and down seeking the promised country; and he was there all the time, folded in her bosom. So is it with us. We long for Canaan when we *stand* in Canaan. We cry for love when we have learned love. We pray for purity when we have tasted purity. We feel our distance from God when God is at the door.

My brother, have you considered these words, "Behold, He cometh with clouds!" It is not "*in* clouds." The idea is that He is to bring the clouds *with* Him—that His coming is to create the sense of distance *from* Him, the search *for* Him. It was when the Samari-

tan woman met Jesus that she first began her questionings. I do not think she had ever before troubled herself with matters theological. There is a mist which is the sign, not of rain, but of heat; it is the morning messenger of a coming day of brightness. So is it with the intellectual mists of your spirit; they mean heat. Yesterday, you were indifferent; you neither believed nor disbelieved—you never thought of the matter. Today, you begin to doubt, to search, to enquire; clouds and darkness are to you round about Him. Some will tell you that your today is worse than your yesterday. They are wrong; do not believe them. It is heat that makes your mist; it is light that makes your cloud. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" asked the scientists of olden times; but why? Because they had seen the star. They sought Christ because His light had come. Even so shall it be with you. You will journey to Jerusalem when you have seen the star; you will seek the manger when you have heard the songs of Bethlehem. Your search will follow your finding. Be not cast down that, in the after-

noon of the day, you are only a *seeker* for God; for the treasure you seek in the field is already in the dwelling, and the spade with which you dig is made of the gold you desire.

"THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN STOOPING"

"Despising the shame."—Hebrews xii. 2.

IN well-known lines Dr. Watts declares that the Cross of Christ leads to humility.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
I pour contempt on all my pride."

Yet I am not sure that he has given the exact account of the matter. It is quite true that the Cross of Christ makes a man stoop to menial things; but why? Simply because he is no longer *ashamed* of them. It is not that he has less sense of dignity; it is rather because he feels that the stooping to menial things has ceased to *take down* his dignity. Many a boy demurs to carry a bag through a fashionable locality; a district nurse will bear it anywhere.

Is that because the district nurse is more humble than the boy? Assuredly not. It is because the thing which makes the boy feel ashamed makes *her* feel more dignified. I would say that the love of Christ does not make us feel more humble, but makes us feel ashamed of fewer things; it reduces the *sources* of our humility. It enables me to walk erect through scenes where yesterday I should have crept stealthily. It is not on my conscious *dignity* I pour contempt; it is on my false *shame.* I am ever proud of my *love;* but that very pride makes me deem nothing menial. The more servile be the work for my Christ, the prouder I am to do it. I feel exalted in proportion as my service bends me. I endure the cross because I despise the shame.

I am not ashamed of Thy gospel, O Christ! It has not killed my sense of dignity; I am *proud* to minister to *Thee.* Not because I feel my nothingness do I stoop to work which men call menial; it is because I despise the shame. My love has turned the shame into glory. I feel, like Paul, that "love maketh not ashamed" —removes the sense of shame. It is not de-

pression that drives me into servile work; it is elation, it is upliftedness. I love Thee—I love Thee!—I love Thee! and I want to do something *for* Thee! It is not the crouching, but the swelling, of my heart that sends me down into the valley. My heart's *ambition* is to descend; my love's *aspiration* is to go down. I would be the servant of the slave for *Thee*. I would rather walk *with* Thee through the mire than *without* Thee through bowers of roses. I should feel more regal with garments soiled for *Thee* than in robes whose selfishness has *kept* them from a stain. It is my *pride* that cries out for the valley. It is my *joy* that makes me serve. It is my *buoyancy* that bears the burden. It is the singing of my heart that makes me forget the toil. It is not the *cringing* soul that can tread Thy lowly way!

"THE MARRIAGE OF PRAYER AND ALMSGIVING"

"Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."—Acts x. 4.

"THY prayers and thine alms." What a singular combination! Are not these two contrary things! Is not prayer a desire to *get;* is not the offer of alms a desire to *give!* How can a man receive a monument for opposing qualities! My brother, these are *not* opposing qualities. All prayer must be a *giving* of something. You are not justified in making it a mere desire to *get.* When you are about to ask anything of your Father, you ought to pause for a moment. Before making a request to your Father, you should give your sympathy to your fellow-man; you should say—"How would the granting of this to *me* affect *him?* Let me remember *his* wants ere I satisfy my own!" That is what I

understand our Lord to mean by the command —"When thou bringest thine offering to the altar and thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thine offering unsurrendered; first be *reconciled* to thy brother!" When you come to the altar of worship to offer up your prayer, ask yourself first of all whether the granting of your wish would be against the interest of your neighbour; and if your heart says "Yes," do not present that prayer *to-day*. Leave it on the steps of the altar. Go back to secular life again. Seek a meeting with your neighbour. Adjust your respective claims. Try if his interest can be made compatible with yours. If it can, you may go forward to the altar once more. Your prayer will then be unsullied, pure. There will be nothing mean in it, nothing sordid, nothing self-seeking. It will be such a prayer as you can present without shame in the presence of the ministrant angels, in the presence of redeeming Love.

O Thou Divine Love, tune my prayers to the songs of Thy heart! Let my first thought in the hour of prayer be, not a getting, but a

giving! Before I say "The Lord will provide for *me*" let me seek to provide for my brother! Let me ask nothing in my *own* name—nothing which does not include my fellow-man! On the threshold to every prayer teach me to say "*Our* Father!" Let all my petitions be for two—myself and humanity! Let me ask, not "my daily bread," but "our daily bread"! If my district is in drought, let me not ask universal rain! Let me pause to consider whether my want is felt by other districts; it may be that elsewhere the soil is crying for the sun! Let my almsgiving precede my prayer! Ere looking at my own parched land, let me remember my brother's sodden field! Let me hear the voice of his blood crying from the flooded ground! Make my prayer from beginning to end a duet! Let it ever have two voices—my brother's and mine! Let its first note be "*Our* Father;" let its last be "Deliver *us* from evil!" Thy heart will be glad when Thou hearest the harmonious music—when the prayer and the alms go up together.

"THE MARRIAGE OF PRAYER AND JOY"

"Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing."
1 Thessalonians v. 16. 17.

JOY and prayer—these are strange allies—strange elements for perpetual union. To rejoice evermore and to pray without ceasing—are not these contradictory acts? Are not joy and prayer opposite things? Is not joy a sense of fulness; is not prayer a sense of want? How can these both go on for ever? Must not the advent of perfect joy be the death of prayer? No, not if you speak of *Christ's* joy. Christ's joy is love—*fulness* of love. But what is fulness of love but fulness of *want?* What is my love for you but my want of you, my need of you, my insufficiency without you! All love is a great prayer. Its very joy is the joy of insufficiency. Love is the cry of my soul for a *companion* soul. Love is the

declaration that I am unsatisfied with myself. I do not say *dis*satisfied; I need not be that. What I feel is a sense of incompleteness. The creation of my heart is unfinished, and I crave its finishing. When I clasp the hand of a friend I experience a joy; but the joy is also a want—a pain. In that moment I am coming *out* from myself, abandoning myself. I am confessing that to dwell *within* myself is to be in a land of famine, to feed upon the husks. The deeper my love is, the deeper is my sense of want, my need of another. I am least content with myself when my joy is most full.

Let then, O Lord, my joy and my prayer be knit in eternal union; may both be among life's *unceasing* things! May I "rejoice evermore," and yet "pray without ceasing;" may nothing ever break the marriage tie! I should not like to have an eternal joy which excluded eternal prayer. I thank Thee that Thou hast provided an eternal joy which is *compatible* with eternal prayer. Let me *enter* into this joy of my Lord! Give me that Divine joy called love—that joy which is a hunger of the heart. I have read that on the great day of the world's feast Thou

didst stand in the midst and cry, "I thirst!" That was both Thy fulness and Thy want. The fulness of love is the heart's deepest hunger. Thine was the fulness of love; Thine was the heart's deepest hunger; Thy joy *made* Thy prayer. Let me *enter* into Thy joy; let me enter into Thy prayer! When my joy shall be Divine, my want shall be Divine too. I shall thirst most when I reach Thy glory, for Thy glory is love. I shall hunger most when I reach Thy fulness, for Thy fulness is love. I shall pray most when I reach Thy joy, for Thy joy is love. I shall be least self-satisfied when I am nearest to Thy sun, for Thy sun is love. When I can rejoice for evermore I shall pray without ceasing.

"CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION"

"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it."—Psalm xxxix. 9.

"I WAS dumb because *Thou* didst it"—because the calamity was sent by Infinite Love. And so Christian resignation is not despair but *hope!* I have been all wrong in my view of it! I thought it was prostration; I see it is energy. I thought it was the heart sleeping; I see it is the heart on the wing. I see that the glory of the Psalmist's resignation is not his speechlessness; it is the *reason* for his speechlessness. "I opened not my mouth because *Thou* didst it." It is a very easy thing to be dumb in the experience of suffering; I think it is the easiest of all things. The most common effect of grief is a paralysing one. But Christian resignation is the *absence* of paralysis. It comes not from loss of power, but from the *influx* of power.

It is not the submission to a cross; it is the submission to a crown. It is not the wearing of a thorn; it is the wearing of a flower. It is not the crushing of a will; it is the birth of a fresh willingness. Not because I am a poor creature does Christ bid me be resigned; it is because I am a rich creature, with the hope of treasures untold. "Because *Thou* didst it" —because the shadow is a bit of the sun, because the seeming discord is the weaving of a melody, because the calamity is the disguise of *love!*

Lord, teach me the meaning of a resigned heart! Men tell me it means "to give up human love." Teach me that it comes through the *stimulus* to human love! Why dost Thou bid me dry my tears? Is it the command to accept my pain? No, it is the command to reject it, to repudiate it, to disbelieve in it. It is the command to believe that, seen from other skies, my calamity wears another colour, a brighter colour. Be mine *that* resignation, O Lord! I would not be dumb through despair, as the Buddhist is. I would not be dumb through apathy, as the Stoic it. I would not

be dumb through satiety, as the Worldling is. I would not be dumb through witheredness, as the Cynic is. I would not be dumb by having my heart emptied in *any* form. I would be dumb by having my heart quickened, deepened. Many can say to my soul, "Peace, be still!" but Thou alone canst say it without killing the *life*. I refuse to be resigned except through *Thee*. I will not be content to suffer wrong; but I will be content to wait for the *right*. I will bear if *Thou* didst it. I will not bear if Pilate did it, if Herod did it, if Caiaphas did it, if chance or accident or fortune did it. I yield, not to loss, but to love. I surrender, not to despair, but to hope. I bend, not to the yesterday, but to the morrow. I still the tempest of my heart, not in the presence of the waters, but in the presence of the rainbow. I cease to cry, not because I accept the night, but because I see the star. I fold my hands to no calamity, but to the wings of the coming morning. If my heart is stayed, it is stayed only in *Thee!*

"PENALTY AND PARDON"

"Esau found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Hebrews xii. 17.

"I go to prepare a place."—John xiv. 2.

IT is not said that Esau "found no repentance," but that he "found no *place* for repentance." His repentance was abundantly manifest, and with it his forgiveness. But the idea is that repentance did not give him back his lost place in the community of men. You may be forgiven by heaven without being reinstated by earth. David got his punishment after he had been pardoned. There is a comfort in that story. When you are overtaken by just penalty you attribute it to the anger of heaven. You need not do so; you may have been already forgiven. When a man seeks pardon "carefully and with tears," he will get it instantaneously; there is a place prepared for the penitent in the mansions of the Father.

But there may not be a place ready for him in the mansions of *nature*. The prodigal has spent his substance in riotous living. He has heard his Father's voice, and he has come home. But that will not bring back the lost substance. Doubtless there is a ring and a robe awaiting him—the best ring and the best robe. But it is not the *old* ring and the *old* robe. He has shattered his first constitution. God will by and by give him a new constitution, but it will not be the former one. Meantime he comes in dilapidation, in squalor, in want. It is an emaciated man that listens to the music and the dancing. He has got his welcome, but as yet he has got nothing more. The songs are in his ear, but the thorn is in his flesh. His Father has embraced and kissed him, but the fruit of his sowing remains.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thy revelation of the prodigal! It tells me that Thy welcome may precede my peace. Help me to remember it in my times of *dis*peace! When, in answer to my cry for pardon, there seems to come only the just reward of deeds ill-done, help me to remember that the prodigal's welcome came be-

fore his glory! When I have lost the old place among men, when I am clothed in retributive rags, when I am bearing the harvest of my own tares, help me to remember that the prodigal was embraced ere he was beautified! I bless Thee for that revelation, O my Father! I bless Thee that my pardon waits not for my peace! I bless Thee that Thy forgiveness lingers not! I bless Thee that Thy mercy is independent of nature's mercy! The law takes its course on the penitent thief spite of his penitence; but Thy love waits not for the course of the *law*. The cross crucifies him, but Thy Christ first crowns him; earth's door is closed, but Thy gate first opens; life's birthright is lost, but Thy Kingdom first comes; and ere the human place has known him no more Thou hast prepared for him a place in Paradise!

"THE CATHOLICITY OF CHRIST'S CRADLE"

"Nations shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising."—Isaiah lx. 3.

THE birth of Christ was the meeting of three continents—Europe, Asia, Africa. Europe appeared in Herod; he represented the power of Rome. Asia appeared in the "wise men of the East;" they represented the wisdom of Persia. Africa appeared in the escape of the infant Jesus; it was a flight into Israel's old home—the land of Egypt. Each brought a different atmosphere to the Cradle of Bethlehem. Rome brought the life of the West—the active, practical, working life. Persia brought the life of the East—the deep, meditative, intellectual life. Egypt brought the shadows of a life beyond the earth—the attempt to read the great secret of death. And the Christmas Child has met these three

human cravings—the cry for work, the cry for knowledge, the cry for a life beyond. He has met Rome by the offer of a new field for human energy. He has met Persia by the opening of a new gate of knowledge. He has met Egypt by the revealing of a life beyond death. The Child-Jesus has given more than He got. It is *He* that has brought the gold and frankincense and myrrh! Three things are represented by the nations round His cradle—body, mind, spirit—Rome, Persia, Egypt. And He has met them all. He has brought what Rome loved—new strength to the body, new power of physical endurance. He has brought what Persia loved—fresh fields of investigation, fresh liberty to explore. He has brought what Egypt loved—the prospect of a deathless pyramid, the hope for an immortal thing.

All these wants are *mine,* O Christ; in Thee I have become one with all nations! To Thy cradle I *come* with the nations. I bring the Roman's craving for the body. I bring the Persian's craving for the treasures of the mind. I bring the Egyptian's craving for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Give

my soul the things Thou hast brought to the nations! Give me the strength Rome sought—the strength of Thy Gethsemane! Give me the light Persia sought—the knowledge of Him who is the source of all knowledge! Give me the vision Egypt sought—the power to see a thing which will not pass away! Then will this be to me a happy Christmas. Then will this Christmas make me a complete man—a man all round. Then will three worlds be mine—the material, the mental, the eternal. I shall be more athletic than the Roman when I have Thy resurrection body. I shall be more studious than the Persian when I obtain Thy view from the Mount. I shall be more devout than the Egyptian when I see Thine Immortal Life unveiled on Olivet. Be these Thy Christmas gifts to me, O Lord; so shall I learn the brightness of Thy rising!

"THE PERMANENT THING"

"He hath set eternity in their heart."
Eccl. iii. 11 (R. V.)

THERE is something in us which is independent of the years. It is eternal —changeless. It does not grow; it does not fade; it is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. We speak much of the changes which the years bring. And truly they bring changes to many things. They change manners, customs, modes of life. The culture of the modern Briton is quite different from the culture of the ancient Jew. If the Judges of old Israel were to awake in modern London, they would find an intellectual world which they would not recognise. But they would also find a world which they *would* recognise. There is a region which the years touch not, which the centuries change not; it is the heart; God has set eternity *there*. The instincts of

the heart are timeless. You enter a modern drawing-room to bid a friend good-bye, and your friend insists on going with you. You deem it a beautiful tribute of love; and so it is. But I can take you back three millenniums to an age, comparatively barbarous, and there I can show you the very same tribute. I can show you in the land of the Judges of Israel one woman bidding another good-bye, and that other refusing to accept her farewell, "where thou goest I will go, and where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." There has been in all these three millenniums no improvement in *love*. There are changes in the leaf, changes in the fashion, changes in the theory; but God has set *eternity* in the *heart*.

Speak not, my soul, of the things that vanish with the years! There *are* things that vanish; but there is something which remains; and the thing which remains is the greatest thing. Why rests thine eye ever on the blank places, the vacant places! Why art thou ever joining in the dirge of the hymnist, "Change and decay in all around I see"! It may be "in all

around;" but it is not "in all within." The marks of time may be on the leaf; but eternity is in thy *heart*. Thy heart is neither older nor younger than it was in the *primitive* days. Thy love is like a rock in the sea of time; the waters have not washed it away. Keep thine eye on the rock, O my soul, for that rock is Christ! Wring not thy hands over the desolating wave; love *laughs* at the wave! Love is independent of the years; it makes equal fourscore and seventeen. Love can retain its romance in old age. Love can be a primrose amid the withered autumn flowers. Love can sing in the night the joys of morning. Love can plant the spring at the gates of December. Love can put a child in the midst of the temple's grey sages. Dry the tears thou hast shed over thy fleetingness, for thou hast eternity in thy heart!

"ALONE WITH CHRIST"

"And they which heard it went out one by one; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."—John viii. 9.

THIS is the first revelation of the Day of Judgment; a sinful soul meets face to face with Jesus—with Jesus as her Judge. She meets Him alone. I believe this is typical of Christ's judgment of all souls. I think the moment immediately after death is a moment of solitude in which the spirit stands face to face with Christ. I think it is a moment of simple retrospect in which the past lives as a present—in which I shall see myself in the light of the Son of Man. "I thought it was to be a general assize," you say; "is it not written that the dead, small and great, shall stand before God?" Yes, my brother, but it does not follow they shall stand before *you*. You may be moving in a procession whose every man is in-

visible to you. God sees it all; but *you* may be conscious only of yourself and Him. You may hear no tread behind you; you may see no man before you; you may feel yourself alone with God. I think this moment of solitude is more favourable to judgment than is the scene popularly figured. The presence of a visible crowd does not help self-examination. It is a retarding influence. It makes me look, not in, but out. I keep criticising the chances of the multitude when I ought to be considering my own. Like Peter, instead of asking pardon for my denial of the Lord, I fix my eye on *John*, and say, "Lord, what shall *this* man do?" It is well that for one instant a screen should be drawn between my brother and me. It is well that in the great procession John should be *hid* from Peter's eye. It is well that for a moment on the Mount I should see no man but Jesus only.

My soul, practise being alone with Christ! It is written that "when they were alone He expounded all things to His disciples." Do not wonder at the saying; it is true to thine experience. If thou wouldst understand *thy-*

self, send the multitude away. Let them all go out one by one till thou art left alone with Jesus. To be alone with Jesus is to have thy judgment-day. It was when the Lord put out the Pharisees that the woman began to feel her sinfulness. As long as the Pharisees were there she kept saying to herself, "They are as bad, they are as bad!" But when the Pharisees went out she lost that consolation. She stood alone in the Courts of the Lord *with* the Lord; she could only measure herself by *Him.* Hast thou ever figured thyself as the last of living men? Hast thou ever fancied that all were dead but thee? Hast thou ever pictured thyself the one remaining creature in the earth, the one remaining creature in all the starry worlds? In such a universe thine every thought would be "God and I! God and I!" And yet He is as near to thee as that—as near as if in the boundless spaces there throbbed no heart but His and thine. Practise that solitude, O my soul! Practise the expulsion of the crowd! Practise the stillness of thine own heart! Practise the solemn refrain "God and I! God and

I!" Let none interpose between thee and thy wrestling angel! Thou shalt be both condemned and pardoned when thou shalt meet Jesus alone!

"THE PECULIARITY OF HUMAN GREATNESS"

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."
Hosea xi. 4.

CORDS and bands—these suggest a state of limitation. A cord is something which confines, imprisons. Is it not strange that God should draw man by the thing which limits him! However, strange, it is true. Man is drawn to the sky by that side of his nature which depresses him. It is not my sense of infinitude that makes me crave for God; it is my sense of limit. I am distinguished from the beast of the field not by the things I *have,* but by the things I have *not.* The lower creatures have more liberty than I; they have fewer cords, fewer bands. There is no restriction imposed upon their acts; they roam at will through the forest, they flit unfettered through the air. But the moment *my* conscious being

dawns I find myself in bands. I have not power of free movement; I cannot do as I choose. There is a band of conscience round me—something which says, "Thou shalt not!" There is a band of duty round me—a thing which says, "You are bound—you ought!" Above all, there is a band of love round me. This is the most limiting of all the cords. It makes me feel that I am literally tied to my brother—that I am a part of his body, and cannot get away. Men speak of love as the spirit's *wing*. Yet truly it is rather the spirit's cord. It keeps me chained to *you*. It refuses to let me soar without you. It bids me lift your weight, your pain. It holds me to the ground where you are lying. It compels me to bear your cross.

O Christ, I bless Thee for Thy cords! It is these, and not my wings, that have lifted me to Thee. It is my limits that have widened me; it is the bands of love that have enlarged me. I once thought I should reach Thee through the broad expanse. I thought I could soar to Thee on the wings of speculation, on the pinions of fancy; but I found they brought me no

nearer to Thee. I have come nearer to Thee by the most unlikely road—the narrow way. Not on the path of the bird have I found Thee. Not on the track of the telescope have I traced Thy footsteps. Not where imagination transcends reality have I seen Thy face. I have met Thee amidst my bonds. I have met Thee when I wore creation's extra chain—the chain of love. My house of bondage has been my Land of Canaan; my prison has become my palace. The tribes of the air have flown upon the wings of the wind, and have *not* reached the Promised Land; *I* have walked with the steps of *weariness* and have come to the shining river. My cord has emancipated me. My limit has liberated me. My fetter has freed me. My cross has crowned me. The burden of my love has burnished my life with gold. Thou hast drawn me upward by that which threatened to keep me down; I bless Thee, O Lord, for Thy restraining bands!

"CHRIST'S APPROPRIATION OF THE SECULAR"

"His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things."
Hebrews i. 2.

IF I become a Christian, must I give up the things of the world? The writer to the Hebrews says, No. He says that becoming a Christian is not an abandonment, but a transference of man's state. I do not give up the things of the world, but I make a new will; I make Christ heir to them. If I gave them up, I should leave Christ heir to *nothing*. There is a great difference between *abandoning* a thing and giving it to Christ; it is the difference between annihilating and transferring. I knew a lady who, when she became serious, sold her piano—an instrument in which she was proficient. She should have made Christ the heir to her piano. It is too bad to burn all the fine pictures in the house before you hand it

over. I am told to cast all my *cares* upon Christ—to make Him the *heir* to my cares; and it is well. But is Christ to have nothing but my cares; is He not to have my advantages too! Shall I give Him only my thorn and keep back my rose! Shall I yield Him only my tares and withhold my wheat! Shall I offer Him only my tears, and withhold from Him the sight of my smile! Shall I let the flower wither before presenting it! Shall I impoverish my life before surrendering it! Shall I mutilate my spirit before committing it into His hands!

Nay, my Lord, I will not do *that!* I am making Thee the heir to my estate, and I will not give Thee only the *barren* soil. Thou art coming into my ancestral dwelling, and I will not dismantle it beforehand. Rather will I beautify it for Thy coming. I will light warm fires within it. I will spread a rich carpet for Thy feet as they did at Jerusalem long ago. I will repair the old furniture. I will enlarge the rooms. I will paint the walls. I will adorn and fructify the grounds. I will say of my house what Thou hast said of Thine—"I go to prepare a place for *Thee.*" *All* that is in my

house shall be Thine. I will not divide the rooms into secular and sacred; they will all be sacred. Every room will be a private chapel—a place for the worship of *Thee*. Not by *speaking* of Thee will I serve Thee, but by diffusing Thy spirit. I will try to put Thy spirit, not only into my sorrows, but into my joys. I will make Thee heir to my gifts by using the gifts for others. Men call the Church Thy service; I will make the World Thy service too. I will try how many my joys can gladden, how many my gifts can cheer, how many my wealth can succour, how many my influence can shelter. I will make Thy spirit heir to all my pleasures, for I shall have no pleasure unshared by human hearts. All my bread will be Communion bread; all my wine will be Sacramental wine. Thou shalt be the accompaniment to all my music, the guide of all my travels, the companion of all my excursions, the aim of all my ambitions, the joy of all my entertainments, the counsellor of all my transactions. I shall be a better man of the world when I have made *Thee* heir of all things!

THE SECRET OF ARTLESSNESS

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."—Matt. vi. 3.

THE virtue here commended is artlessness—unconsciousness of self. In a human soul it is a quality supremely beautiful. I do not think it is supremely beautiful in a bird of the air. The song of the lark charms me, and the singer is unconscious of his song; yet I never say I should like to be a lark. Why so? Because the lark is not only unconscious of himself; he is unconscious of me. The artlessness which I admire in my brother-man is not the absence of a motive; it is the absence of an *individual* motive. I should not appreciate a gift if the giver were unconscious of its value; that would take away the charm. I do not want him to forget the value of the *gift,* but to forget his own value. I want him to see *me* in his mirror—to be so filled with

interest in me as to be unaware that he is passing himself by. There is an unconsciousness of self which comes from emptiness, and it belongs to the undeveloped mind. But the unconsciousness of self which *I* desire is one which comes from deeper fulness. I would become artless through love. They tell us that self-consciousness mars a photograph. Yes; but how am I to get free from it? Shall I try, when the impression is being taken, to sink into a reverie—to dull the pulses of my own heart? Then the impression also will be dull, bereft of the spirit. But if I want to be off guard, there is a more excellent way—let me think of another! The art of love makes us *artless*. I have read of Moses, "he wist not that the skin of his face shone." Doubtless the unconsciousness was the reason of the shining; but how did he get this unconsciousness? Did he fall asleep? Did he become apathetic? Did he try to feel himself a poor creature? All the reverse. He had been upon a mount of glory. He had gazed on the Divine beauty. He had been attracted to an Other. He had seen the sun, and had forgot his own candle—forgot, even, to

extinguish it. He had lost himself, not in darkness, but in light.

In that light let *me* lose myself, O Lord! Be mine the artlessness of love—of love to Thee! If in Thy light I shall see light, I shall be unconscious of all beside. Not in death, not in apathy, not even in self-depreciation, would I forget myself, but only in Thee. Take me to the Mount, O Lord, take me to the Mount! Bathe me in the radiance of love! Let the sight of Thee hide me from my own soul. It is not that I want to feel my righteousness to be "filthy rags;" that itself would be a *thought* about self. I want to forget my righteousness altogether—to think nothing about it, either good or bad. Not by depression but by elevation would I lose my pride. Not by soiling my garment in the mire would I become oblivious of its existence. I would forget it by gazing an *another* garment—the spotless robe of Thy Christ. With Thee, with Him, would I stand upon the Mount until my own plain and my own valley alike disappear. When I reach the hilltop of Thy love I shall be artless as a child.

CHRISTIAN CHILDHOOD

"Then went he down and dipped in Jordan; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child."
2 Kings v. 14.

WHEN a man has dipped in the wave of experience he comes back to the impressions of his childhood. I have been often struck with the fact that there are no two states so like one another as the first and the last. There is nothing so like the beginning as the end. In the morning the sun stands upon the mountains; in the evening he stands upon the mountains too. Life in its primitive form is guided by instinct; life in its completed form is again guided by instinct—the power of intuitive sight. Our existence opens with a sense of freedom—freedom born of self-will; our existence culminates also in a sense of freedom—freedom born of *surrendered* will—the liberty of love. I have been often

impressed by these words of Paul, "We rejoice in hope; and we glory in tribulation also—knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Do you observe the beautiful *circle!* We begin with the rejoicing in hope, and we *end* with the rejoicing in hope. Between the hope at the beginning and the hope at the end there is interposed a wave of experience—a dipping in the waters of tribulation. We stand at the close of the day on that very point of the beach where we stood at morning; but there is a difference. At morning we stood there without experience; in the evening we stand there *after* experience. In the morning we had a child's buoyancy, because we saw not the coming tribulation; in the evening we have a child's buoyancy, because we have *conquered* the tribulation. In the morning we were sanguine because we expected to *escape* the storm; in the evening we are sanguine because we have borne the strength of the storm and learned that life is stronger than its ills.

Restore to me, O Lord, the spirit of my youth; give me back the buoyancy of early

days! Set me on that point of the beach where I stood at morning! Yet not with the same eyes would I view life's boundless sea. When I stood on the beach in youth the waters were calm. My joy was the gladness of seeing no storm. It never occurred to me that I could plunge into the waters and live. Not thus would I stand upon the beach in the afternoon! I would survey the sea from the old standpoint with a new glass. I would assume the sanguineness of the morning, but for a better reason! No longer would I have my hope to rest in clouds averted; I would have it rest in clouds endured. I would have all the old possessions in a new casket. I would have childhood's trust, but trust after trial. I would have morning's glow, but glow after gloom. I would have life's first faith, but faith after fighting. I would have youth's bright buoyancy, but buoyancy after battle. I would get back the confidence of the dawn, but confidence after conflict, the courage of love to Jesus. The child that Christ took in His arms had been bathed in the waters of Jordan.

PETER'S TYPE OF THE ENDURING

"The imperishableness of a meek and quiet spirit."
1 Peter iii. 4.

I HAVE translated the words as they ought to be rendered. Peter is contrasting the things which are showy with the things which last. He says that such ornaments as silver and gold are perishable things. He says that if we want to get something which is *im*perishable we shall need to seek it among things which are *not* showy. And certainly he selects a most unshowy specimen as the type of immortality! A meek and quiet spirit—that seems a very humble thing! If the nations of his day had been asked to select their symbol of imperishableness, not one of them would have chosen *this*. They would all have chosen symbols which expressed the loud and flaring. Egypt would have brought her pyramids; Greece, her flowers; Rome, her soaring eagle;

Judah, a stone of her great temple. But none would have said "My emblem of immortality is a meek and quiet spirit." He who first said *that* was the Divine Man who preached the Sermon on the Mount; *He* it was that promised the permanence to the meek. Peter got his ideal from *Him*. Peter was speaking against his own nature. His was *not* a meek and quiet spirit. He was very loud, very showy, very eager to display himself. He had been captivated by a mind the opposite of his own. Originally, he would have promised immortality to the powers that could walk upon the sea; under the influence of *Jesus,* he predicts it for the quiet deeds of home.

My soul, despise not thy moments of silence! Despise not the hours of thy self-restraint! Is it not written in the Apocalypse that the Book of Life is the *Lamb's* Book! And what does *that* mean? Just that thy most lasting colour is thy most quiet colour. Bethink thee! what has been the most imperishable thing in the most changeful years? It is a deed of self-restraint; men call it Calvary. All else of the far past has vanished from thy sight. Thrones

have tottered, dynasties have faded, fashions have changed. But this silent deed of self-surrender, done in an obscure corner of a captive town, is as fresh as the memory of yesterday. The old world has gone from thee—its faces and its phases. Rome has let fall her eagle from the air; Greece has lost her flowers in the field; Judah has seen her temple in the dust. But still to thee one spot remains green—the little hill of Calvary. There it stands undimmed, undying—outliving cohort and legion, surviving Senate and Cæsar! Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, are gone; Priest and Levite tread the spot no more; but the Green Hill keeps its verdure to thy view, and its message is ever the same—"The imperishableness of a meek and quiet spirit."

THE ROAD TO A CORRECT LIFE

"Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."—1 Thessalonians v. 8.

WHAT a strange recipe for a sober walk in life! I should have thought Paul would have prescribed hours of hard work and commonplace duty. I should have thought he would have administered a sedative to the imagination. Instead of that, he recommends a course of powerful emotions—faith, hope, love. And verily Paul is right; he must have known human nature *well!* For it is not by making men commonplace that you will make them sober. You cannot cure a bad passion by creating passionlessness. We are in a great mistake about this matter. We see people living soberly, sedately, correctly. We say, "They must have a very even temperament; they must be free from all flights

of fancy." I think it is generally the reverse. I think a man is never so correct on the *plain* as when he has a sure sight of the *hills*. The moments when we go wrong are mostly our prosaic moments. There is a deep significance in the words, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh mine aid." Yes, it is from the *hills* that mine aid comes. It is by the light of the hills that I walk on the common road and do not stray. It is not sober *precepts* that keep me sober; it is high flights of faith, bright visions of hope, deep pulses of love. To live a steady life I need, not the drag, but the wing. I need, not the motto in the copy-book, but a sight of the golden west. I can only travel through to-day on the strength of the good time coming.

Therefore, O Lord, I understand it all. I understand why Thou hast said before all things, "Come unto *me*." Thou hast not begun by saying, "Live soberly, walk circumspectly." Thou hast carried me to the Mount *first of all*. Ere Thou hast given me one *precept* Thou hast set me on the hill with *Thee*. Other masters have begun with earth and then led

up to heaven; *Thou* hast begun with heaven, and then led down to earth. I bless Thee for that sublime, that Divine wisdom. Earth is too *difficult* for me till I have seen heaven. The more prosaic be my duties, the more I need the wings of the morning. I will not try the *plain* till I have met Thee on the *hill*. Meet me on the hill, O Lord! Lift me *above* earth that I may *serve* earth! Fire me with high enthusiasm that I may be fit for the *commonplace!* Send me Elijah's chariot that I may sweep o'er the dusty plain! Give me one gleam of Thy glory that I may tread the beaten path! Take me for one minute into Thy pavilion ere I go out on my daily round! Inspire me with the poetry of faith, hope, love, that I may not stumble in the world's prose! I shall only be adequate to the day when I have put on the armour of the Life Eternal.

THE SINLESSNESS OF THE SECOND BIRTH

"Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin."
1 John iii. 9.

IS not this a startling statement—a most discouraging statement? Is there any one of us that has not something bad in him? Is that bad thing a sign that I am not born again? St. John does not say so. What he says is that the new life which is born will not be held responsible for the bad thing. It is not that the old impurity is not *there,* but that it is no longer imputed. When the sun of a new day rises, it rises amid the clouds of the *old* day. It does not all at once become glorious. It dawns amid the shadows gathered and left behind by yester eve; with these shadows, for a time, it walks side by side. Yet we do not impute these shadows to the new day; we impute them to the past night. The

rising sun is *guiltless* of them. Its new birth is unspotted by them. It has become heir to the corruptions of a previous day; but the previous day bears all the reproach, and the new light goes free. So is it with the new light in my soul. It is born amid the clouds of yesterday. It dawns amid the shadows of the past —the vices of the past. It does not wait for the death of old habits; it comes *before* they die. None the less do we hold it sinless, guiltless. The old habits which strew its path are no part of its attire. They belong to the garments which the vanished night has left behind, and they dim not our sense of the Divine beauty which is rising.

My Father, I thank Thee for the revelation that there may be a sinless Christ within me where the memorials of sin yet remain! Often have I been distressed at the clouds after conversion. There have come to me moments of rapt vision—moments when heaven was near, and earth seemed far away. Yet by and by they have passed, and I have found myself repeating the deeds of yesterday, and I have cried with exceeding bitterness "The sinless vision was a

delusion; I have *not* been born again!" At such times, O Lord, let me hear this message of Thine that the clouds of yesterday are not imputed to the rising sun! Let me hear the new life within me saying, "These sins are not mine!" Let me hear the new man within me singing, "It is not *I* who have done it; it is an heirloom of yesterday!" Teach me that, though my Christ is born in the manger, the manger is not a part of my Christ! Teach me that, though He is born with the beasts of the stall, He lives by another life than theirs! Teach me that, though He cometh with clouds, the clouds belong to my yester eve—not to the light of His morning! Teach me that the new life is sinless, though it wears the garments of the old! Let me not sink before the sight of shadows after dawn! Let me not quail before the view of grey amid the gold! Let me not deem my Christ still dead because the stone is not rolled away! Let me remember that His rising *precedes* the opening of the grave! So shall I not despair though evil lingers; so, even amid corruption, shall I cherish hope that already in my soul there may be a life without sin.

CHRIST'S CALL TO THE BEREAVED

"And another of His disciples said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."

Matt. viii. 21, 22.

"SUFFER me first to bury my father"—to finish the days of *mourning* for my father. What the young man really meant was that he did not feel in spirits for joining such a public cause as that of Jesus—involving, as it did, such contact with the world; he wanted for a while to nurse his grief in seclusion. There are many whose sorrow takes the form of this young man's sorrow. We have a tendency in the time of bereavement to resist locomotion, to keep within doors, to go nowhere. I believe this fear of going *out* springs from the dread of coming *back*. I once urged a bereaved lady to seek a temporary change of scene. She said she would go at once but for the terror of *returning*—of meet-

ing anew the old haunts without the old accompaniments. To come back to the old house and find no welcome there—to enter the hall and miss the former greeting, to mount the stairs and hear no footstep descending to meet me, to see the familiar chair without its occupant, to experience the blank in spots which once were full—all this is reaped by the bereaved heart in coming home. It reminds us of the poet's plaint when he stood by a familiar sea and heard the breaking of a familiar wave, but missed "the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still." The heart that has not buried its sorrow refuses to go out because it dreads returning.

And yet, my brother, Jesus bids thee go. As He bade the young man, so He bids thee. Thou canst not cure thine own sorrow by nursing it; the longer it is nursed, the more inveterate it grows. It will be harder for thee to go out to-morrow than it is to-day; it will be harder *still* the day after. Thou canst not cure thy sorrow by nursing it; but thou canst cure it by nursing another's sorrow. Thinkest thou that Jesus wanted this young man to be

a stoic! Was it from the ties of the heart He called him when He said "Follow me"? No, it was *to* the ties of the heart—*other* ties of *other* hearts. It was no foreign scene to which Jesus called him—no scene foreign to his grief. Not from the graveyard into the dance did He summon him, but from the smaller into the *larger* cemetery. Thither in thine hour of sorrow does He summon *thee*. He bids thee bury thy sorrow, not in Cana, but in Gethsemane—not in the winecup, but in the common pain. It is by tears He would *heal* thy tears; it is by grief He would *cure* thy grief. Come out into the larger cemetery; come out to meet the common pain! By no frivolity will He dry thine eyes. To follow Him is to follow the cortège of all the Nains and Bethanys. To follow Him is to follow the stream of universal human suffering. Bury thy sorrow beside that stream!

THE CURATIVE WISDOM OF JESUS

"Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him."—Luke viii. 30.

I HAVE often thought this was a strange mode of treatment from the Great Physician. He asks the man, "What is thy name?"—what is the nature of your complaint? He knew perfectly well what it was—much better than the patient. Yet He asks the patient to fix his mind on his own symptoms! Was this well? Is it not reckoned good to *divert* the mind from its own calamities? Not always. There are times in which the contrary is desirable; and this was one of them. This man had been *hardened* by his calamity. He had received it in a bad spirit—an arrogant, rebellious, stony spirit. He had become so sullen that he had grown dead to feeling; he had lived among the tombs. What was the

first thing to be done with such a man? To rouse him, to *make* him feel. Before all things the atmosphere of the tombs, the sense of deadness, must be cleared away. The nearest parallel to this narrative which I know in modern days will be found in these touching lines of Tennyson:—

> Home they brought her warrior dead,
> She nor swooned nor uttered sigh;
> All her maidens round her said,
> "She must weep or she must die."

The resemblance lies in the deadening experience, the tomb-like experience, of each sufferer. Both have to be awakened to a sense of their own sorrow. Both have to be roused into the experience of their pain. Both require to get their sleep interrupted—to be pointed to the storm which is raging o'er the deck. When the heart is becoming petrified it is good for it to realise that the name of its woes is "Legion."

Hast thou considered this wisdom of Jesus! There are moments when thy grief can only be cured by tears. When thy joy is brought home dead, often canst thou neither swoon nor sigh, neither sob nor moan. The clock of life

stands still; it cannot point to the name of its own sorrow. Thou art among the tombs. Thou art dumb, deaf, blind to thy surroundings. Hast thou considered the wisdom of Jesus! Say not it was one of the poets made the discovery that such a one must weep or die! It was seen earlier than by any of thy poets; it was seen by the eye of Jesus. "What is the name of thy grief?" He cries to the benumbed heart; "what is the name of the dread power that wrestles with thee?" He wants thee to feel the might of the opposing legion. He wants to wake thy tears. He wants to break the reign of death in thy heart. He wants by a gush of waters to melt the ice upon the river. "What is the name of thy sorrow? Tell me the tale of thy grief! Speak it out; do not keep it in! If it be kept in, thou wilt be cramped and frozen. Tell it to somebody, nay, tell it to *me!* I know it already; but to speak will help thy heart. Pour forth the pent-up torrent into my bosom, and the flood will bring thee to Mount Ararat; thy tears will give thee rest! Thy grief has passed the sepulchre when it can say, 'My name is Legion.'"

THE BEST TRIBUNAL

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."—2 Cor. v. 10.

I AM glad it is before the judgment seat of *Christ* I am to stand. I should not like to stand before any lesser tribunal. I used to think it was a hard thing that the lowest should be confronted by the highest. I have found that it is the kindest of all things. None is so fit to judge the lowest as the highest. The beginner in art should go to the master-painter; the beginner in music should go to the master-singer. I thought in the days of old that the best chance for me would lie in the mind nearest to my level. It was a great mistake. It is the master-mind that sees the possibilities of the tyro. I will not be judged by the angels —not even by the guardian angels. They may guard me, but they must not judge me. I have done a piece of beginner's work. It is very

crude, very faulty, very childish. But possibly there may be germs in it—prophecies of a coming beauty. Who shall detect these germs? Not my brother on earth, not the angel in heaven. These are not high enough to take the child in their arms. They are on too low a level to catch sight of the returning prodigal; their eye cannot discern a form so far off. If I want recognition of my possibilities, I must lift my eyes to the *hills*.

To Thy hill of holiness do I lift mine eyes, O Lord; my safety comes only from Thee! I fly to the *height* to find room for my *valley*. Only before *Thy* judgment seat is there a chance for me. There is no chance for me when I stop at the *plain*. The minds in the *middle* of the ladder have no eye for those below them. Therefore, I will not pause in the middle; I will seek the topmost round. I pass the judgment thrones of earth; I come to *Thee*. The judgment thrones of earth are speckled thrones; Thine is the great *white* throne. I appeal to the great white throne *against* the speckled thrones. I say with Thy Psalmist, "When shall I appear before *God?*" I have long been

appearing before *man;* I thought the lower court would be the lenient court. But I have ever come out a condemned soul. My brother cannot see my germs; he is too near to me for that. I appeal to the higher court, the upper court. I appeal from Felix to Cæsar; I appeal from earth to heaven. I understand *now* Thine invitation, "Come unto *me* and *I* will give you rest." I *come* to Thee! I pass the plain in my flight from the valley; I make for the height. I bring my sins to *Thy* judgment seat—my crimson sins, my scarlet sins. I come to the mind of the *master*—the Master-Mind. Save me from the judgment thrones of the partially pure; I would "appear" to none but *Thee!*

THE PRESERVATION OF WASTE THINGS

"The napkin that was about His head, wrapped together in a place by itself."—John xx. 7.

WHY so careful of so poor a thing? A napkin which had covered the face of the dead Christ is wrapped together by angel hands, and laid in a corner apart! It had never been meant for any use but as a covering of the dead face of Jesus. Even that use had been rendered impracticable; Jesus had risen, and His face had become radiant with life. There was no further need of the napkin. It had been intended only for the grave; and now even for the grave it was useless. Why did the angel not simply pass it by? Why take it up tenderly, fold it together carefully, lay it by separately? We can understand the gathering of the fragments that remained from the desert feast, for these

could make another feast. But the napkin had reached its final sphere, and there was no further place for it; why should celestial hands be so sedulous for its preservation? Because all our discarded past lives in the thought of God. The things we have surmounted and thrown away are gathered up by heaven. It takes our chaff into its garner. The dead past which I dismiss with scorn is treasured by the hand of the Almighty. It is meant to meet us again in the Resurrection Light—to be seen in retrospect from the top of the hill. Many a dead garment is glorified by memory; many a flower blooms in the heart when it has withered in the garden. This napkin had only been associated with sorrow; it was to be associated with joy. It had been the symbol of tears; it was to be the badge of victory. It had been the mark of defeat, of failure, of death; it was to be the sign of triumph, of success, of life for evermore. God says of the vanished years, "I will not let them go until you have blessed them."

Lord, teach me the solemnity of the treasured napkin! Teach me the solemnity of the truth that Thou hast a place for the things I have

discarded! How much that I have cast away as graveclothes has been treasured by *Thee!* How many things that I have thrown as rubbish to the void have been folded up and laid aside by *Thee!* Often it seems to me that the moments I called waste have been the most fruitful moments. I have had hours in the desert which appeared to me useless—hours when I seemed to be standing still, driven into a corner, shunted from the way. And, lo, in the light of future years I have looked back, and the desert was a garden! It had been the most crowded hour of my life, the most epoch-making hour, the hour when angels ministered unto me. Help me to look reverently on my discarded garments! Even when I have outgrown them, let me reverence them! Even when they seem never to have fitted me, let me reverence them! Even when they appear to have cramped me, limited me, confined me, let me reverence them! Let me remember that in the light of the resurrection morning I shall see them—see them as the garments of the universe! Let me remember that *Thou* hast not outgrown them,

though *I* have—that they are parts of Thy time-vesture, and must be vindicated by the perfect day! All my dead things shall live again in *Thee.*

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